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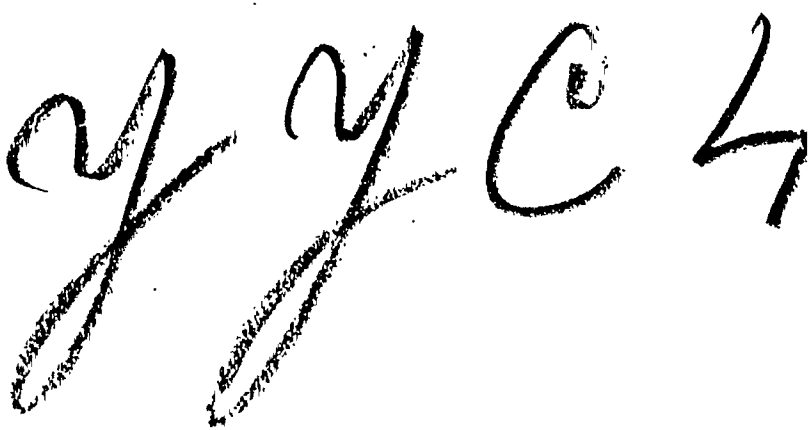
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

VOL. II.



LONDON: PRINTED BY
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THE CORRESPONDENCE

OF

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

WITH A MEMOIR BY HIS SISTER

MADAME DE SURVILLE

TRANSLATED BY C. LAMB KENNEY

With Portrait and Facsimile of the Handwriting of Balzac

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

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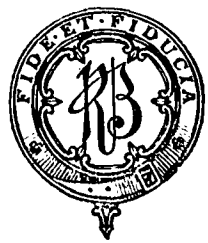

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LONDON
RICHARD BENTLEY & SON, NEW BURLINGTON STREET
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen
1878

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à Monsieur Dutaq, Gerant
du Journal

Toutes les professions doivent
avoir la non-culpabilité de
Droit il sont responsables,
mon voyage et celui de Garand
contribuera pareillement
à sauver la vie à un
homme au pauvre condamné
qui, sans nous, aurait péri
par homme. Nous sommes
partis d'aller à Belley chercher
quelques renseignements, et dans
quelques heures, nous repartons
pour Paris. Je leur en mesure
de démontrer les erreurs commises
par la Justice et d'empêcher
un de ces malheurs irréparables
qui font une flétrissure pour
des époques éclairées, et dans

peu de temps, je pense pouvoir compter
dans St. Etats de Jersey, une Electrice
de plus, en offrant au Roi, une vie
pompeuse de Blême, attachée à Richelieu
Le Jeune Ruffieux vous devra beaucoup
pour le concours que vous voudrez nous prêter
et nous aurons tous fait une bonne
action.

agréez mes Compliments et l'assurance
de mes sentiments les plus distingués

De Balzac

M. Mon cher Balzac, ce pauvre garçon
n'est pas coupable, si il y a mal jugé,
nous trompons. - Cependant, après notre
retour avec Reybaud étions fort gênés
et ce fut à nos dépens aussi difficile
que je le croyais.

MEMOIRS AND LETTERS

OF

BALZAC.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris : March 1, 1835.

My dear Dablin,—Do not accuse me of forgetfulness, my delay arises from a little misfortune; I have been detained for seven days in the Hôtel Bazancourt;[1] I only got out on Wednesday. This tiresome hindrance has disordered all my affairs, for it is difficult to conduct them in a prison. As soon as I am out, I will come to you. *Mille amitiés* as sincere as they are old.

To the Duchesse de Castries, Paris.

Paris : March 1835.

Madame,—The entire edition of 'Le Père Goriot' was sold before it was advertised. I can

[1] Balzac was often embroiled with *La Garde Nationale*, for negligences in matters of discipline. He was occasionally driven to curious expedients to avoid these interruptions to his work, for which *La Garde Nationale* had no respect. *La Garde Nationale* was *not a volunteer corps!*

only send you a copy of the second edition. 'Séraphita' is progressing; it will appear at the end of the month. The labour of this work has been crushing and terrible. I have passed, and I still pass, days and nights over it. I write, re-write, and write again, but in a few days all will be over. I shall have either increased my reputation, or the Parisians will not understand me. With them ridicule supplies the place of comprehension. I expect success; if it comes at all, will be distant and tardy. It will be appreciated by a few here and there. I think it will be a book for those who like to lose themselves in the vagueness of infinity. The eighth chapter, entitled 'Le chemin pour aller à Dieu,' will win the hearts of all pious souls over to me.

Why do you think of me as being still in the Rue Cassini? . . . I am much nearer to you, and perhaps farther off, according to the fancy of the moment.

I do not like your melancholy; I should scold you well if you were here. I would put you on a large divan, where you would be like a fairy in the midst of her palace, and I would tell you that in this life you must love in order to live. Now, you do not love. A lively affection is the bread of the soul, and when the soul is not fed it grows

starved, like the body. The bonds of the soul and body are such that each suffers with the other.)

I cannot preach any longer, for I must go to work; I have so much to do! In the space of a month I have to get through what would take others a year and more.

I talk to you about myself, because I hope you will talk to me only of yourself. We can thus exchange our thoughts.

I went out yesterday on urgent business, and I saw my two caricatures by Dantan. Send to Susse for them. You will tell me if they are not droll.

In a few days I am to sit to an artist, who has asked me to let him take my portrait. I have had the weakness to consent. Is not all this very little? It seems still more so when one has just been raised to heaven among the mystics.

(That great idea of Woman promised in the preface, which you find so attractive, is half realised. It is called 'Le Lys dans la Vallée.' Perhaps I deceive myself, but I imagine it will draw forth many tears. I have surprised myself in tears whilst writing it. This work will be the last of the 'Études philosophiques.')

'I began the 'Lys dans la Vallée' several

months ago. Some evening you will see me come in with this book, and if you weep you will not be displeased with me.

A thousand kindly things in return for your flowers, which bring me much happiness, but I wish for something more besides.

Now adieu.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Paris : Good Friday, April 17, 1835.

You may perhaps see me in a few days, and Borget will not be able to say I am lost to my friends. The heavy work required by the last chapters of 'Séraphita' caused an inflammation of the nerves on the left side of my head. The pain has lasted these three days, excepting that it is more or less violent. I believe I must change the air and leave off work, to my great sorrow, as I am in haste to finish, and time is the staple material.

As soon as I have published 'Séraphita,' I shall come and take ten days' liberty in the Frapeslois. Such, at least, is my project, but I am subservient to so many dominant causes that I cannot say, '*I will do that,*' in any certain or positive manner.

There are in me several men—the financier,

the artist struggling against the newspapers and the public; then the artist struggling with his work and his subjects; lastly, there is the man of passion, who throws himself on a carpet at the feet of a flower, and admires its colours and breathes its perfumes. You will here say, 'That rogue of a Honoré!' No, no, I do not deserve this epithet; you would think I am very good to refuse all the pleasures which present themselves, and to shut myself up, to continue at work.

Come, *cara*, why do you not write to me? Do you think you have lost anything in my affection? The experiences of life quicken the growth of old friendships.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

1835.

Dear Sister,—Madame Delannoy will give the fifteen thousand francs! Tell my good Surville that the first step is thus made towards power.

If the business of your mother-in-law can be thus arranged, it will give me all the more pleasure, as I have lost seven thousand francs; the three first sheets of my 'Drôlatiques' were at the Rue Pot de Fer,[1] as well as the copies of the

[1] A printing-house in that street had just been destroyed by fire.

first and second *dizain.* This is enough to knock one down! It needed just this to upset my month (of holiday?). Luckily, I had not sold them, or I might have had some trouble.

I hope Dablin will be able to help me in what is wanted to finish the great affair. I am, however, so glad, that now I do not trouble myself about this loss. Adieu, good luck will not be prevented from coming.

To M. William Duckett, Editor of the 'Biographie Michaud.'

Paris: July 1835.

Sir,—You will receive the article 'Brillat-Savarin' to-morrow (Thursday). Its delay arises from all the materials for the notice having been mis-sent.

I do not send back the 'Biographie;' but I leave the price of the book to you, as I do not think that my article will cover the sum I owe you. It is impossible to grant more than three or four columns to 'Brillat-Savarin.' I had asked for 'Gall,' with whom my previous knowledge would have enabled me to deal better than with 'Brillat-Savarin,' and that article would perhaps have made you my debtor. I am sorry for the delay, which all the other work may easily explain, and I

hope this article may still reach you to-morrow in time.

Accept, sir, my sincere congratulations.

To Madame de Balzac, Chantilly.

July 19, 1835.

My beloved Mother,—The affair has come to nothing, the bird was frightened away, and I am very glad of it. I had no time to run after it, and it was imperative it should be either yes or no. Here I am in the midst of excessive labours, which must continue for the next three months. I certainly ought to have some one with me, for I am afraid of these prolonged labours; they exhaust and weaken all the human qualities I would desire to keep alive. Tell Mdlle. Pigache from me that I thank her from the bottom of my heart for all her care of you. Try to keep well, for all is going on well. Do not be vexed at my silence; I am working enormously. I have lately begun to work twenty-four hours at a stretch, and then go to bed for five hours; this gives me twenty-one hours and a half of working-time every day. A thousand hearty kisses.

Note.—At this period Balzac had already been for some time in correspondence with the dis-

tinguished woman to whom he was hereafter to give his name. Unfortunately, part of this correspondence was destroyed at Moscow in a fire, which happened at the house of Madame Hanska. Several gaps will thus be observed in this correspondence, all the more to be regretted as those which have escaped the fire possess great interest.

To Madame Hanska, at Ischl, Austria.

Paris : August 1835.

I have just arrived from Berry, where I went to see Madame Carraud, who had something to tell me, and on my return here I find your letter in which you describe the dinner at Madame ——'s ; at the very moment when certain newspapers represented her as inventing the infernal machine of Fieschi and awaiting its success at Aix, where she was conferring about it with Berryer. How are these people to be governed, who for the space of twenty-four hours, and over the extent of two hundred square leagues, may be made to believe such things ! You complain, in a very amiable way, of the scarcity of my letters ; and yet you know that I write as much as I can. I am now working for twenty hours a day. Shall I be able to bear up against this ?

I know not. The praises you bestow on 'Lherminier' rather surprise me; it is clear you have not read his other works; they have deterred me from reading the one[1] you praise; the fragments of it that were published in the 'Revue des Deux Mondes' did not appear to me worth much; it is not dogmatic politics, but dogmatic literature. I shall be obliged to read 'Au delà du Rhin,' since you wish it, but I am afraid I may have to reproach you, in spite of my faith in your fine forehead.

I have not said much to you about Madame de Girardin's[2] book; it is better than anything she has hitherto done, but it is not remarkable.

You have, then, been ill! You have been suffering; always *by* and *for* others; always this personal abnegation; always this fatal compliance. Why do you take these terribly long walks? Have I not told you that the two doctors whom I consulted for you, ordered you not to walk? Then, why do you walk? Your letter has made me melancholy; it seems indifferent and cold; as if the ice on which thrones repose had seized on you. I would much rather be scolded or quarrelled with than be treated with this immovable calmness, this supreme sweetness of a sovereign

[1] *Au delà du Rhin.* [2] *Le Marquis de Pontanges.*

by divine right, who is much too certain of her power not to abuse it royally, but tranquilly and with dignity.

If you are not staying at Vienna for some time, what is to be done about the manuscripts of 'Séraphita' and the 'Lys dans la Vallée'? 'Séraphita' will not appear till the third or perhaps the fourth Sunday in October.

If you return home for good, give me a very safe and exact address. In a country like yours, deprived of all the resources of civilisation, and in the depths of those deserts you are going to inhabit, my letters will perhaps be more agreeable to you than in the midst of the dissipation in which you are now living, and which they interrupt sometimes perhaps with ill-humour.

May you never know the bitter melancholy which deception brings with it, and which is fostered by isolation; and that at the very moment when one needs even an exaggerated expression of affection from one's friends! The cruel conviction gains on me that I cannot long bear up under the present severe strain of work. People talk of victims of war and of epidemics; but who is there who thinks of the battle-fields of the arts, of the sciences, of literature, or of the heaps of

dead and dying caused by the violent struggles to succeed? .

Under the heavy pressure of work, driven as I am by necessity, I have no support. Work! always work! nights succeed to nights of consuming work, days succeed to days of meditation; execution succeeds to conception; conception to execution! Very little money compared with what I want; although it is immense compared with what I produce. If my books were each of them paid for like those of Walter Scott, I could get out of my difficulties; but although I am well paid I cannot get free. I shall have gained twenty-five thousand francs by August. 'Le Lys' will bring me in eight thousand; one half from the publisher, the other half from 'La Revue de Paris.' The article in the 'Conservateur' will bring in three thousand francs. I shall have finished 'Séraphita,' begun 'Les Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées,' and finished the number for Madame Béchet. I doubt if ever a brain, a hand, and a pen ever before performed such a *tour de force* with the aid of a bottle of ink. And yet there lives a person—a dear person—who is loved with reverence, who complains that the correspondence is languid, even though I scrupulously answer all her letters!

It is impossible for me to speak of Fieschi and his machine in my letters to you, through the ordinary channels. Men profoundly versed in politics, and outsiders, like your humble servant, who are not without a certain gift of second-sight, agree in thinking that the blow was aimed neither at the Republic nor at Royalty. Fieschi has said nothing, of that you may feel assured, and in all probability he will not speak. I have had this from Lisfranc, the surgeon who is attending him. Somebody has given him a great deal of money; perhaps he himself does not know *who* induced him to act.

I am perhaps on the eve of commencing a political career, which may in time give me a certain degree of influence—if it does not land me in a great position,—but there is nothing attractive in this career, so far is it removed from my tastes and my habits of mind and character. Two individuals—men powerful from their character and influential from their position in the State—and two journals, one of them widely circulated, not only in France but in Europe—have made overtures to me. By uniting, they would become a power, especially under a capable and intelligent leader. It would be necessary to find two other journals, and to make a fifth out of them. Combinations,

attractions, as the English call them, would have to be found, to obtain public favour and to crush by their superiority all other journals, which would vanish before them like the leaves of autumn swept by the north wind.

Sooner or later the success of the party thus supported and represented would be sure to triumph. But what is that party to be called? That is the question. Shall it be the party of the 'Intelligentiels,' or simply 'Les Intelligents'?—that would be better; would it not? This name does not give a handle to ridicule, and in this country, where vanity is the indigenous malady, everybody would feel flattered to belong to it, if only for the sake of the name. All this is very fine as a project, but to carry it out is another affair. I listen without committing myself to the flattering or simply pleasant things which are said to me on the subject; my own projects, like my thoughts, are elsewhere. I own to you that I am cowardly enough to shrink from these political promises in order not to compromise my hopes of a journey to Vierzschovnia.

You see that in proportion as I progress in my literary work, I am proceeding on a parallel line of perhaps more importance; in a word, that I shall

not stop short in politics any more than in literature. Will you feel any remorse when you see that in spite of your indifference, I keep you *au courant* of all my work and my plans as much as if you professed to have the smallest interest in them? You see what a thing habit is! But if the new law is passed which ordains that every political article must be signed, we shall have to renounce a good many things. At Paris everything entails a frightful loss of time, and time is, they say, the staple of which life is made. When I am not leaning over my paper by the light of wax candles—in the room which I have described in 'La Fille aux Yeux d'Or'—or lying down from fatigue on the divan, I am panting with pecuniary difficulties, sleeping little, eating little, seeing nobody; in short, I am like a republican general making a campaign without bread and without shoes. Solitude suits me also in other respects. It is absolutely necessary to finish that which is begun, and all that would turn me from my work is too worthless when it is not too wearisome.

You have, I think, mentioned Madame de Castries. I am on terms of pleasant courtesy with her, as you yourself seemed to desire I should be. But do not, I entreat, institute any comparison

between the friendship which you inspire and that which you grant, for there those who love you have the advantage. Do not fancy that I ever cease to think of you, because even busy as I am, in the moments of fatigue, of despair—in those moments when energy is relaxed, when one is in one's arm-chair, the arms hanging down, the head stupefied, the body tired and the mind full of pain —it is impossible that wings of memory should not carry one back to those times when one was refreshed under cool, green, fresh shades, to those days when one has been travelling towards a person whose smile reached one through the distance, and who is sincere and pure of heart, who reanimates one, and renews, so to speak, by the distractions of the soul, the forces which some people call talent. You are all this and more to me, and you know it.

Adieu, au revoir à Virzschovnia! even were it necessary to traverse the whole of Europe, to show you a face that has grown old, but a heart always deplorably young, that flutters at every opportunity, at a scribbled line, at an address, at a perfume, as if I were not thirty-six!

I hope when you are safe at Virzschovnia, well established in your easy chair, you will write regularly the journal for me—the journal of your

life—more calm and more solitary than that you led at Ischl, and that in short you will *find the time* to be more faithfully my friend, and that when we meet it may be as though we had seen each other yesterday.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris : 1835.

My dear Dablin,—I am so nailed down by my proofs, and by my labours, which seem to renew themselves, that you would be truly charitable if you came to see me this very day (Monday), and not to look too closely to see if I am trespassing on your friendship, for you must consider me as a prisoner, the slave of an idea, and of a work as ferocious as any creditor's.

A thousand kind and friendly compliments.

To Madame Laure Surville, Monglat.

Paris : September 1835.

Alma soror!—At last the sky is clearing! I have two pieces of work on the stocks which must and ought to succeed.

Altogether these will suffice to pay November and December. I shall thus have paid thirty-six thousand francs in the last few months! . . . Yet

a few more efforts, and I shall have triumphed over a great crisis by the aid of a feeble instrument —a pen!

By 1836, if nothing contrary comes to pass, I shall then owe nothing to anyone, except to my mother; and when I think of my disasters, and the sorrowful years I have passed through, I cannot help feeling some pride in the thought that by dint of courage and hard work I shall have conquered my liberty.

This thought has put me in such good spirits that the other evening I made plans with Surville, in which you and all my friends were included. I settled that he was to build a house close to mine, our gardens were to join, our fruit-trees were to be in common. I was to be well and prosperous! The good brother raised his eyes to heaven and smiled. There was much love both for you and for me in that smile, but I could see also that neither he nor I had as yet got our houses. Never mind, hopes and projects keep up one's courage; and if it please God to let me have my health, we will both of us have our houses yet, my good sister.

All this is not the object of my present letter.

Considering that you are at Monglat, not knowing what to do with your talents, I pray you

to write out fully with much detail, with all the glorious and pompous phraseology of a school-girl, and the cleverness of Mademoiselle Laure de Balzac, those beautiful ideas on the subject of the 'Deux Rencontres,' which you once told me you had thought of one night when you could not sleep. I think of adding them to the preceding chapters of the 'Femme de Trente Ans.'

Do not omit anything, for I have forgotten it all. Send it to me at once, for the fourth volume is going to press for a new edition, and I must give the copy corrected to the printer by the 15th. I have received a line from Madame Carraud rather hard to understand. She compares you to the sun; I should have thought the moon not a bad comparison, but it is not I who will deny the sun. Dablin has lately been here, graciously obliging, and good to me, as also are Madame Delannoy, Auguste Borget, Madame Carraud, and the *alma soror* of Honoré de Balzac, who sends you a thousand affectionate thoughts, and a kiss to the Survilleian Three who swarm at Monglat. The pain in my side is persistent, and I am beginning to be a little anxious about it; it is the consequence of my fifty days and nights of work, which helped to set my affairs straight, but which have crippled me with fatigue, and I am so much afraid of being

hindered by leeches and cataplasms from finishing my work, that I have adjourned calling in advice; if, however, it becomes worse, I will see both a doctor and a mesmerist. Meanwhile, I am taking warm baths.

The business I have on hand is, that I am selling the reprint of the works of that poor fool Horace de Saint-Aubin, Viellerglè, Lord R'hoone, and other pseudonyms. The sale will be made through a third person, with authority to *deny* these works, *which I will never recognise.* But as they would reprint them without my leave, in that cursed Belgium, which does so much harm both to authors and publishers, I yield to a necessity which translates itself into good crown pieces for me, and in this way I lessen the evil.

Souverain will edit my 'Contes drôlatiques.'

Little sister, I have, as you see, good news to tell you; the reviews are at my feet, and in January they will pay me better for each sheet. Hé! hé!

Now that readers are so pleased with the 'Médecin de Campagne,' Werdet expects to sell the 8vo. edition in a week, and the 12mo. in a fortnight. Ha! ha!

At last I have something to meet those heavy liabilities of November and December, which made you so anxious. Ho! ho!

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

La Boulonnière : October 1835.

Dear Sister,—You may pay Auguste[1] all that is due to him; I will return the amount to you before you want it.

I am at the Boulonnière in quietude, away from the interruptions which in Paris never allow me to have a single day without a storm. I am finishing the 'Fleur-des-Pois,' which ought to appear on the 25th; otherwise, I should have a lawsuit with Madame Béchet, which would be the death of me. I am also finishing 'Richard Cœur d'Éponge,'[2] which may of itself be sufficient to release me.

My poor sister, I am drinking the cup to the dregs; it is in vain that I work for fourteen hours a day; it does not suffice.

Whilst I have been writing to you, I have become so tired, that I have sent Auguste to excuse me from fulfilling various engagements.

I am so weak, that I am dining earlier in order to get to bed sooner, and I never go out anywhere.

I have broken with Girardin in such a manner that we can never speak to each other again.

[1] His servant.

[2] This really was never finished.

Why is my mother so melancholy? I shall still suffer, it is true; but whilst fighting, one must march on, and not give way. I shall triumph at last.

A thousand kind things to you, and a grasp of the hand to Surville.

To Madame Laure Surville.

La Boulonnière: October 1835.

My dear Sister,—'La Fleur-des-Pois'[1] is finished. We appear on the 10th.

I think I have succeeded in what I tried to do. The scene of signing the contract of marriage indicates what will be the future of the husband and wife.

You will find what I believe to be a truly comic scene—the struggle between the young and the old notary.

I have succeeded in making the discussion of this act interesting and true to the life. I have now written one of the great 'Scènes de la Vie privée;' later on, I intend to show, in the 'Inventaire après décès,' how the horrible so often mingles with the ridiculous! The *commissaires-priseurs*[2] ought to know a good deal about human

[1] This was the first title of the *Contrat de Mariage*.
[2] Valuers.

turpitude! I shall set them to talk! . . . My editor, the sublime Madame Béchet, has been foolish enough to send the corrected proofs of the 'Fleur-des-Pois' to St. Petersburg. I am told nothing is spoken of there but of the *excellence of this new masterpiece* (editorial puff). The comic portion of the 'Fleur-des-Pois' can only be understood by men of business; the public will not like it, but it is necessary to include all classes, and my scheme obliges me to be universal. All that you write to me about the purchase of my piece of land at Ville d'Avray makes no difference to me; you do not understand, then, that this real estate will represent what I owe to my mother? . . . I have not the time to discuss it here, I will convince you when I return to Paris.

I, who am so busy, write to you! while you? . . .

To the Duchesse de Castries, Paris.

Paris: October 18, 1835.

Madame,—When my doctor imperiously prescribed my native air, he ordered complete repose of mind along with it; I therefore left my letters at Paris, when I went to Touraine. On my return, I find your two letters, and that

of the Duke de Fitzjames; such is the reason why my answer has been delayed.

Will you kindly present to the Duke de Fitzjames both my thanks for his kind invitation, and my regret at not being able to accept it. I am once more plunged into the hard labour rendered necessary by pitiless and absolute obligations. Formerly I was free, now I am chained. Work alone can set me free from these obligations; but for a long time to come, they will isolate me in the solitude of a crater, where no one will venture to come—at least not hitherto. It would need to be something more than a woman to come there. For the last two years my life has been a series of sacrifices; and of all I have to sacrifice, there is one thing to which I cannot get accustomed: it is the harsh judgments that are passed on me.

You have mingled bitterness with the flatteries you have had the goodness to bestow on my book, as if you knew all the weight of your words and how far they reach. I would a thousand times rather you would consider the book and the pen as things of your own, than receive these praises. But I cannot now give utterance to all I think; it might perhaps astonish you, and it would also require some sort of veil which

would take up a good deal of time, and I must—poor working man that I am—return to my labour; the bell has rung in my cloister, I must finish for 'La Revue' the description of an affection so grand in its own nature, that it can resist all manner of injuries coming from without; it is an ever-flowing spring, from which the ungrateful may draw water without the power to dry it up.

I am able to paint sentiments like these without any risk of exhausting my pallet, which Fate has kept too well supplied. That gay and child-like character, or as you call it 'Surtout leger,' is an outer sheath which has often served me, but oftener still my heart has received sharp and bleeding wounds, for our temperament is our life-blood: He who made all things has thus ordained it. Deign, madame, to receive the assurance of my respectful homage, and accept the expression of those sentiments which are entirely your own, and which you seem always disposed to doubt.

Your humble and very obedient servant.

To Madame de Balzac, Chantilly.

Paris: October 30, 1835.

My beloved Mother,—Do not make yourself unhappy, the bills are all discounted, everything

will be paid. I shall then finish the business as regards the 'Contes drôlatiques,' to meet the calls for the month of November. Take no thought about me. What are seven or eight months' further suffering, when one has already suffered for seven years? Within one year after my liberation, you will be happy. As much as six thousand francs have been offered for my early literary rubbish; I intend, and I expect to have ten thousand francs. Thus you see that this new edition and the 'Drôlatiques' will tide me wonderfully over my daily difficulties, and set me free from the twenty thousand francs that weigh me down. Now, adieu! dear mother. I embrace you with all my heart.

'Fleur-des-Pois' and 'Séraphita' will appear in less than a week.

To M. Edmond Werdet, Publisher, Paris.

Vienna: November, 1835.

My dear Maître Werdet,—You were right and I was wrong. My journey has taken all my money. I arrived here two days ago, and rested all yesterday. I could neither move hand nor foot.

Thanks to Rothschild's letter, his house has remitted me some money; but I shall soon spend

five hundred francs here, and I shall want a thousand to take me back.

Imagine, my money was changed five times on the road, because I was obliged to pay in the coin of the five countries I passed through. I never calculated on the custom-houses, on post-horses, nor on all the five hundred devils of expenses which have taken me by the throat. Thus the folly is complete.

I have already seen some publishers. My journey has not been useless so far as regards the great edition of the 'Études Sociales.' I am now convinced that this edition will put an end to piracy, so far as my works are concerned.

You have been very good to me, my dear Werdet, and I sincerely hope that happy times are in store for both of us.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Paris: December 25, 1835.

Instead of a letter—for I have not a moment to myself—I wished to send you a pretty easy chair, ready for the day when you should leave your couch of maternal suffering, so that I might be represented by a material remembrance, and contribute a trifle towards furnishing your little

rose-coloured drawing-room; but the wretch of an upholsterer was worthy of me: he is so busy that my poor chair will not arrive until New Year's Day. It will say to you that if my time, filled with ink and proofs, prevents me from letting you know that I think of and love you, my heart is in nothing changed.

Borget has not written a line!

I kiss Yorick's[1] forehead, God knows if I do not love these little creatures! I wish all of you whatever you desire, and what I shall never completely possess—happiness. I send a thousand caresses to Ivan; I grasp the hand of the Commandant, and I beg you to let me kiss your forehead, and place there a thousand tender and affectionate wishes for your life; may it be pleasant and fortunate!' The torrent which carries me along has never been more rapid; a more majestically terrible work has never had dominion over the human brain. I go—I go to work like a gamester to his play. I only sleep for five hours, and I work eighteen. When I reach the goal I shall be dead; but the remembrance of you refreshes me sometimes.

I am buying the 'Grénadière,' I am paying my debts. A year would be only a reasonable term

[1] Madame Carraud's baby.

in which to achieve the complete liquidation; but the happiness of owing nothing, which I once thought impossible, is now no longer a chimæra. An article in the 'Revue,' like the 'Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées,' which will appear February 1836, is worth eight thousand francs to me, provided my glory is not merely a reputation, and this reputation a fashion, and this fashion a passing one!

Adieu. I should like to write longer, but I have filled the paper. A thousand good wishes. Write to me: be generous; do not bear me a grudge about anything, for you do not know how at times I deplore this fiery life. But how to leave the chariot!

Your ever devoted.

To Madame de Balzac, Chantilly.

Paris: January 1, 1836.

My dear Mother,—I am in great sorrow, Madame de Berny is dying! There is no hope left. No one but God and myself know what is my despair. Yet I must work, work while my heart is breaking.

I will send you a line to let you know when I can see you.

Your son, who loves you well.

Pray do not torment yourself with regrets; only, my dear mother, have the charity to let me bear my burden without suspecting my heart. To write a letter is for me not only money, but also an hour of sleep and a drop of blood. I cannot afford to have extra anxiety, for I have four volumes in 8vo. to print, to do the 'Revue' for three Sundays in January (it is only the 'Revue' that pays in money), and then, besides, the second issue of the 'Études philosophiques' for Werdet, without which everything will be endangered!

'*To M. Henri de Balzac, Andelys.*

Paris: February 20, 1836.

Dear Brother,—My business will keep me here for a month. Do not baptise this child, that continues the name of Balzac, until the beginning of April.

If it were possible, the pleasure would be greater if the baptism could be put off until the day of St. Honoré.

Laura has told me you wish for a cradle: I will look after one, and send it you. A thousand sincere kindnesses to the new-made mother. I hope this first-born will bring her happiness. Kiss my mother for me. Ever thine.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris : 1836.

Madame,—I was in the country when your letter arrived in the Rue Cassini. Accept my apologies for the delay in my reply; but every one is so anxious to obey your commands that you must naturally conclude it to be a case of *force majeure* when the contrary occurs.

My first publication will be 'Le Lys dans la Vallée;' but if the lawsuit delays its appearance, then it will be 'Les Héritiers Boirouge.'

Find here the affectionate homages of your devoted servant.

To M. Henri Fournier, Printer, Paris.

Paris : May 1836.

Sir,—I propose this week to lodge a complaint, before the *procureur du roi*, against M. Buloz and against yourself, on account of the publication in St. Petersburg in the 'Revue Étrangère' of 'Le Lys dans la Vallée,' previous to its publication in Paris. But as there might be some arrangement between you and M. Buloz, by which you could not be made a party to the suit, I desire that you will demand a prohibition for yourself and

your printing offices to have any connection with my proofs. I will wait until four o'clock on Wednesday.

Under these circumstances, I have the honour to warn you that as there are about two sheets of 'Le Lys dans la Vallée' in type, you will be held personally responsible if they appear without my permission to print them off.

Accept, monsieur, the assurance of my most distinguished sentiments.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris : June 2, 1836.

My dear Dablin,—Are you still like a father to me? I never saw that your bill of May 31 for five hundred francs had fallen due. No doubt you have presented it—but I have the five hundred francs; I ought to have six hundred and ten more to send you; but my lawsuit against the 'Revue de Paris,' which is to be decided to-morrow, the various steps to be taken, and my work to be finished, which last takes me fifteen hours a day, have thrown great disturbance into my life, which ought to be tranquil. Nevertheless, I am sorry, for you had my word, and you will say that poets are not punctual men of business.

Be indulgent!' With this I enclose a copy of my defence for M. Pepin; and also two more, which you may give to such of your friends as seems to you best. Many kind things, my good Dablin, from your old friend.

To M. Émile Regnault, manager of 'La Chirurgie de Paris.'

Saché: Monday, June 1836.

Dear Pelican—All went well until yesterday evening. While walking in the park, I had a rush of blood to the head, from which I have not yet recovered. I have still a buzzing in my head. I arrived at Saché on Monday; Tuesday I rested; Wednesday they made me go an excursion in the country, and this, together with the air of Touraine, made me so well that Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, I made the plot of the 'Illusions Perdues,' of which I have written the first forty pages. It was this torrent of work, no doubt, that carried the blood to the head; but now I am much better. According to all probabilities, I shall have finished the 'Illusions Perdues' by next Saturday. I believe that this will make ninety pages; and I have done well to begin this, for then the 'Cabinet des Antiques' will complete

the two volumes for the Widow Béchet or Madame Jacquillot.[1]

She does not deserve to have 'Les Héritiers Boirouge.'[2] This work, along with 'César Birotteau,' will fill the treasury of Master Werdet; and 'La Torpille' will take its course in the 'Chronique de Paris.' I shall thus have written enough for my twelve months.

Old bird, this letter is to tell you that a hundred francs or fifty crowns would be very useful to your old Mar-à-sec;[3] for, after having finished the 'Cabinet des Antiques,' and perhaps also the 'Ecce Homo,' I should very much like to recreate myself by going to Chenonceaux and Chambord, which are on my road.' I shall not be in Paris before July 8. How is Jules Sandeau? *Mille choses* to the great Trenmer, and the elegant Chaudesaigues. Do not forget either Béthune and Level.

I hope all will go well till the 8th. Tell M. Sergent I shall be at Paris on that day with the MS.; and that atrocious chicaning widow, who has

[1] Name of the second husband of Madame Charles Béchet.

[2] *Les Héritiers Boirouge* became *Les Deux Frères*, or a *Ménage de Garçon en province.*

[3] Le Mar was a *sobriquet* for Balzac amongst his most intimate friends.

little delicacy and no gratitude, will be defeated, as were Buloz and company.

Ever yours,

LE MAR.

P.S.—Say a thousand kind things from me, as you well know how, to Madame D—. As to Werdet, I should like him to have the 'Illusions Perdues,' for they are well polished!

Tell our good Charles de Bernard that I shall want a little poem, 'bien ronflant,' in the style of Lord Byron, for my 'Illusions Perdues.' It is intended to appear as the finest production of a provincial poet; and may be written in either stanzas, alexandrines, or mixed strophes.

It would be very kind of him to do this for me, as I have not the time. I should also like something in the style of 'Beppo,' and of the 'Namouna,' or 'Mardoche,' of De Musset, but it must be a single piece of a hundred lines.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Saché: Sunday, June 1836.

Cara,—My health being upset by my late work, my lawsuit, and my worries in general, I have been sent to Touraine, where my native air has restored me to health.

Perhaps I may go to Paris, by way of Loches, Valençay, and sweet Issoudun. I should like to see Frapesle again, before once more plunging into the battle and going under fire. In any case, however, whether I see you or not, I want the following information about Angoulême; and it would be very kind of you, if you would answer me by return of post, for I shall not stay more than a week at Saché. I want the name of the street by which you reach the Place du Mûrier, where your tinman used to live; then the name of the street by the side of the Place du Mûrier and the Court of Justice, which led to the first house of M. de Bergès; then the name of the gate which opens on the Cathedral; then the name of the little street which leads to the Minage, and is near the rampart, beginning near the cathedral door, and where that large house stood where we used to hear the piano.

I should also like to know, if possible, the name of the other gate by which one went straight down to the Houmeau. This is all; but I am greatly in need of this information. If the Commandant would make me a rough plan of the place, it would be better still.

I send you a thousand tender and friendly remembrances. Laure is not altogether well. My

mother is nearly killed by the vexations caused by Henry. I am always struggling, like a drowning man who fears he has come to the last gasp. At this moment, I am working sixteen hours a day, to get rid of the two last volumes for Madame Béchet, who threatens me with a suit, set on by my enemies who seem to have sworn my ruin.

I have not been able to answer Borget, nor do anything I had promised relative to his affairs.

I worked night and day at Paris; only sleeping two hours in the twenty-four. I thus brought out the 'Lys.' I was half dead when I got into the carriage. Tell him these things, so that he may not accuse a loving and devoted friend, who is also your constant friend, Honoré.

No, I have no more time to finish and seal this letter than the soldier to sleep or to write to his sweetheart when he was marching on Wagram.

A hearty grasp of the hand to the Commandant. I wished to come to you, but Dr. Nacquart insisted on my native air.

To M. Edmond Werdet, Publisher, Paris.

August 1836.

My dear friend,—That illiterate dentist M. M——, who supplements his frightful profession

by the atrocious functions of a serjeant-major, has just thrust me into the 'Hôtel des Haricots.'

Come and see me at once. Bring me some money, for I have not a penny.

To Madame Hanska, at Vierzschovnia, near Berditchaff, Volhynia.

Paris: October 1836.

How is it that friendship, which ought to be an infallible consolation in the great calamities of life, only aggravates them?

I sorrowfully asked myself this question to-night as I read your last letter.

At first your sadness powerfully excited my sympathy. As the letter proceeded, it betrayed sentiments which gave me pain; it contained expressions which wounded me to the heart. Doubtless you are not aware what a deep sorrow is in my soul, nor of the gloomy courage which follows my second great defeat in the midst of my career. When I was overset for the first time it was in 1828. I was then not nine-and-twenty, and I had an angel at my side. To-day I am at the age when a man no longer inspires the sentiment of a protection which is not humiliating, because it is the essence of youth to

receive it, and it seems natural to affection to try to afford help. But there is no question of protection towards a man who is nearer forty than thirty, for protection would then be an insult. A man who is weak and without resources at this age is condemned everywhere.

Fallen from all my hopes—having been obliged to give up everything I possessed—I took refuge here, in the old country house of Jules Sandeau, at Chaillot, on September 30—at the moment when for the second time I found myself ruined, by a disaster at once complete and unforeseen.

To anxiety about the future was added the dreary sense of the profound solitude upon which I entered alone. I consoled myself by thinking that at least there were some in whose hearts I still kept my place. At that moment your letter came to me. With what avidity I seized it!

With what heaviness of heart I locked it up along with the others, before trying to take what little sleep I allow myself! I clung to your last words as to the last branch of a tree when one is being carried away by the current.

Letters are gifted with a fatal power. They possess a living force, which may be beneficial, or evil, according to the circumstances in which they

surprise us. It would be well for two friends, who are very sure of each other, as we are for example, to agree upon certain signs, by which they could know from the aspect of a letter whether it was one of an expansive gaiety or of a melancholy tone; they would then be able to choose the right moment to read it.

I am depressed, but I am not utterly cast down; my courage still remains. The sense of the abandonment and solitude in which I am afflicts me more than my other disasters.

There is nothing egotistical about me; it is to me a necessity to carry my thoughts, my efforts, —all my feelings to some being who is not myself; without this I have no strength.

I should not care for a crown, if there were no shrine at the foot of which I might lay down all the honours which men might have placed on my head.

What a long and sorrowful farewell I have said to these last years, years swallowed up for ever! They have not given me either complete happiness or thorough misery; they have let me live burnt up on one side, frozen on the other; and now I feel that I am kept alive only by the sense of duty. I have entered this garret, where I now am, with the conviction that I shall die in it, worn

out by work. I thought I should have borne it better. For more than a month past I have risen at midnight, and I have gone to sleep at six in the morning. I have reduced myself to the most scanty nourishment that is compatible with life, so as not to trouble my brain with the fatigue of digestion. Well, not only do I feel a weakness of body impossible to describe, but so much vitality and activity is communicated to the brain that I experience strange sensations. I sometimes lose the sense of standing upright; even when in bed I feel as if my head fell to the right or to the left; and when I rise I seem to be carried along by an enormous weight in my head.

I can understand how the absolute asceticism of Pascal, and his immense labours, brought him to the pass that he saw constantly an abyss on both sides of him, and was obliged to have two chairs on each side of the one in which he sat.

I did not leave the Rue Cassini without regret. I still am not aware whether I shall be allowed to retain a few favourite articles of furniture, or my library. I had previously made all kinds of sacrifices; I had left off all little relaxations and indulgences, to have the slight pleasure of know-

ing that they were still mine; they would not go far to extinguish my debts, nor to appease the thirst of creditors, but they would have somewhat appeased mine in my journey through the sandy desert upon which I am entering. Two years of work may wipe off all; but it is impossible that I should not succumb to two years of life like this. Besides, piracy is killing us. Have the newspapers had any influence on the sale of the 'Lys'? I know not, but this I do know, that, out of two thousand copies, Werdet has only sold twelve hundred, whilst the Belgian piracy has already thrown off three thousand copies. I am certain from this result that my works have no purchasers in France; consequently, that a successful sale which might save me is still far distant.

I brought Auguste here with me. I know not if I shall be allowed to keep him. That you may know what my energy is, I must tell you that the 'Secret des Ruggieri' was written in one night; think of this when you read it. 'La Vieille Fille' was written in three nights. 'La Perle brisée,' which at last finishes the 'Enfant Maudit,' was written in the course of some hours of physical and mental anguish: it is my Brienne, my Champaubert, my Montmirail; it is my cam-

paign in France! It was the same with the 'Messe de l'Athée' and 'Facino Cane.'

The corrections are what kill me; the first part of the 'Enfant Maudit' has cost me more than many volumes. I wanted this first part to reach the same standard as the 'Perle brisée,' and to make it a kind of poem of sadness, with which no fault could be found. This has employed me for a dozen nights. Even at this very moment there are lying before me the accumulated proofs of four works which ought to appear in October; and they must be done.

I must surpass myself, since purchasers are so indifferent; and I must surpass myself in the midst of summonses, annoyances of business, and the most cruel money embarrassments; all this in the most complete solitude, and quite stripped bare of all consolation.

This is the last complaint I shall send to your heart; there was something egotistical in the confidence I had in you, which I ought to abolish. You have sorrows of your own, and I will not aggravate them, for I know that your sorrows increase mine. I know that the Christian martyrs used to smile. If Guatimozin had been a Christian, he would have gently consoled his minister, and would not have said, 'Do you think that I, either,

am on roses?' This was a very grand speech for a savage, but we Christians ought to be more polite, if not better men.

I am sorry to see that you are reading the Mystics: believe me, this sort of reading is fatal to minds like yours; it is a poison; it is an intoxicating narcotic. These books have a bad influence. There are follies of virtue as there are follies of dissipation and vice. If you were not a wife, a mother, a friend, a relation, I would not seek to dissuade you, for then you might go and shut yourself up in a convent at your pleasure without hurting anybody, although you would soon die there. In your situation, and in your isolation in the midst of those deserts, this kind of reading, believe me, is pernicious. The rights of friendship are too feeble to make my voice heard; but let me at least make an earnest and humble request on this subject. Do not, I beg of you, ever read anything more of this kind. I have myself gone through all this, and I speak from experience.

I have taken measures that your wishes should be fulfilled relative to the hardest of your commands, in case of an event which your own intelligence will suggest. I am not Byron; but what I also know is, that my friend Borget is not Thomas

Moore, and that he possesses the blind fidelity of the dog. I can only compare this fidelity to that which is borne to you by your serf and moujik at Paris.

I am surprised you have not yet received, from Werdet, 'Le Lys'—the true 'Lys'—in which there is '*also a portrait.*' Do they not say that I have described Madame V. . . ., who is neither young nor handsome, and who is moreover an 'English-woman? This is a specimen of the opinions and judgments to which one is exposed! . . . You, who know all about my life, know also that I had the proofs of the 'Lys' at Vienna, and that you had the goodness to trouble yourself with them, whilst I was running about the city and suburbs in my character of an ingenuous tourist. The manuscript of the 'Lys' was written at Saché, corrected at La Boulonnière, before I had even seen the lady in question. In addition to this, I have received no less than five formal complaints from other persons who accuse me of having unveiled the secrets of their private life. I have received some most curious letters on this subject. It would seem as though there were as many 'M. de Morsaufs' as there are angels in Clochegourde; and angels descend on my head in showers, *only they are not white.* There is much

gossip and tattle of a similar kind, and this makes me regret less the solitude to which I am condemned.

And now farewell. Here is daylight come at last; my candles grow pale. For the last three hours I have been writing to you, and, as line followed line, I hoped that in each one of them you would discern the cry of an affection, true, profound and infinite as Heaven itself—far above the poor transitory vexations of the world, and incapable of all idea of change, although passing feelings of human infirmity may find their way into some lower depths of one's nature, which no angel's foot has ever touched.

What is the good of possessing a reasonable soul, if it be not to place that which is pure and lovely in safety upon a rock so high that no change in things earthly and material can approach to hurt it?

But this would carry me too far. My proofs are calling to me, and I must, without further delay attack the Augean stables of my style, and sweep out the faults. My life has no longer anything to show but the monotony of hard work, of which the work itself is the only variety. I am like the old Austrian colonel, who talked to the Empress Maria Theresa of his grey horse and of

his black horse: I sometimes ride one, sometimes the other; six hours on 'Ruggieri,' six hours on the 'Enfant Maudit,' six hours on the 'Vieille Fille.' From time to time I rise from my chair, and contemplate the sea of houses of which my window commands a view, extending from the 'École Militaire' to the 'Barrière du Trône,' from the Panthéon to the Arc de l'Étoile, and, after having breathed a mouthful of air, I go back to my work. My rooms on the second floor are not yet finished; I play at living in a garret, like the duchesses, who eat brown bread by accident. There is not another garret in Paris so pretty as this; it is white, clean, and as coquettish in its arrangements as a grisette of sixteen. I intend to make it a spare room in case of illness, for downstairs the sleeping-room is a passage, and the bed two feet wide, which only just leaves room to pass. My doctor has assured me it is not unhealthy, but I doubt this, for I need a great deal of air, as I consume an enormous quantity. Therefore I sigh for my large sitting-room, in which I hope to be settled in a few days. My rooms cost me eight hundred francs, but I shall no longer form part of the National Guard, that nightmare of my life! I am still pursued by the police and the *état-major* for the cost of eight days of prison,

but as I never go out they cannot catch me. My rooms here are taken under another name, and I shall ostensibly be living in lodgings. Receive my most tender homage instead of the soul, which I would gladly send you, without its worries, and vexations, but with its courage and endurance, of which I should like to give you a little; so valiant, so heroic a soul as yours must not faint by the way.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris: November 16, 1836.

"My good Dablin,—All the loans, all the combinations, have failed; but at two o'clock to-day I signed an agreement which ends all my troubles, and an agony which, had it continued, must have killed me.

This agreement will make some noise, because it gives me advantages similar to those given to Chateaubriand. I have only time to announce this to you.

I shall only have to pay you, my mother, and Madame Delannoy, which I can do without very great trouble; and if I die in the labour to which I am condemned, your three creditorships are guaranteed by the assurance on my life.

I give you an old friend's grasp of the hand.

To the Marquis de Belloy, Poissy.

Paris : 1831.

My dear Cardinal,[1]—Your unfortunate old 'Mar' wants to know if you are at Poissy, as it is possible that he may ask you to afford him a shelter in the most secret of hiding-places, and to observe the greatest discretion, seeing that he is under *personal restraint*, on account of Werdet. All his men of business have counselled him to take time and flight, declaring that the struggle between the 'gardes du commerce' and himself has begun.

In this case, a room, secresy, bread and water, with a salad or à pound of mutton, a bottle of ink and a bed, are all that are wanted by one condemned to the most severe literary servitude, and who is ever yours. LE MAR.

Letters to Louise.

During the years 1836 and 1837, Balzac, in spite of his occupations and anxieties, found time and interest to carry on a correspondence with a lady whom he did not know, and with whom he never had any personal acquaintance. He never saw her, nor knew anything of her beyond the Christian name 'Louise.' None of the letters

[1] *Sobriquet* given by Balzac to the Marquis de Belloy, great-nephew of the Cardinal of that name. *Gambara* is dedicated to the Marquis de Belloy.

have any precise date, and they are chiefly addressed to the object of making the lady understand that the friendship she desired, and the entrance into his private life, was absolutely impossible to a man overwhelmed with work and worries of all kinds. That a man like Balzac should have taken the trouble to write to an unknown person, whose name he loyally abstained from learning when an accident brought it within his power, shows that her letters must have possessed some intrinsic value for him, and that he was a *preux chevalier* with an ideal delicacy of sentiment, which bears out all that his sister, Madame Surville, says in his honour. He must have had something adorable in his nature, which makes one bitterly regret that such a man should have been the prey of ignoble and wearying pecuniary anxiety, which in his case was not the result of thriftlessness or extravagance.

Some extracts from these letters will not be without interest; but as a whole they are vague, and lack the frankness and reality of his letters to the friends whom he knew and trusted.[1]

'The soul which has to accommodate itself to all the exigencies of a life of desperate struggle, the

[1] The novel of 'Facino Cane' is dedicated to 'Louise.'

life of an artist who painfully gains over-night the bread which must supply the needs of the next day, having to fill up the abyss of a ruined fortune, and doubtless destined to die at the moment of its accomplishment, this soul has ceased to exist. The attachments of the world are subject to the laws of the world, they have barriers which circumscribe them on all sides. You say truly my time is at least devoted to Art —that second religion; whilst yours is eaten up by visits. Visits! do they leave behind them any good for you? For the space of twelve years, an angelic woman stole two hours each day from the world, from the claims of family, from all the entanglements and hindrances of Parisian life—two hours to spend them beside me—without anyone else being aware of the fact; for twelve years! Do you understand all that is contained in those words? I cannot wish that this sublime devotedness which has been my salvation should be repeated.

'I desire that you should retain all your illusions about me without coming one step further; and besides, I do not dare to wish that you should enter upon one of these glorious, secret, and, above all, rare and exceptional relationships. Moreover, I have a few friends among women, in

whom I trust—not more than two or three—but they are of an insatiable exigence, and if they were to discover that I corresponded with an *inconnue*, they would feel hurt. You see there are many reasons why I do not tell you—*mon petit nom*.'

'All my letters are written during the time taken from sleep. I tell you this, not to enhance the value of my letters but to make you, if possible, comprehend the life I lead. Is it not evident that the letters I write can only belong to those friendships which are proved and lasting? Nevertheless, I do write sometimes, just as a poor soldier will infringe on his hour of leave, and absent himself from his barracks, and find himself punished for his fault the next morning. You speak to me of a devotedness that is not of this world, and at this word there are few who would not feel their heart stirred within them; but if you knew that the heart to whom this phrase is addressed is one of the most loving in the world, which yet finds itself condemned to solitude, to incessant work—no, you will never, with all your intelligence, divine the emotions of such a nature. Have I not seen friendships arise, and pass away, —wearied out? great devotedness which could not

endure much trial? The devotedness of friendship is very powerless; friendships, even the most durable of them, have their jealousies. My life is a strange one; but here comes pitiless labour to interrupt me, and to call me to work. Know that all which you believe to be good in me is even better than you think, for the poetry that is written is always below the poetry that is unexpressed.

'What good there may lie latent in me is stifled under the outside circumstances of the man who is always at his labour. My necessities are not me, any more than is the harsh exterior to which necessity constrains me; everything in me is a contrast, because all that is around me is contrariety.

'Say whatever you like about "La Duchesse de Langeais," your remarks do not affect me; but a lady whom you may perhaps know, illustrious and elegant, who has approved everything, corrected everything like a royal censor, and whose authority on ducal matters is incontestable. I am safe under the shadow of her shawl.'

'I have never wilfully given pain to any human being, therefore burn my last letter and let it be as though it had not existed.

'Working as I do eighteen hours a day, it is often an absolute impossibility to write a letter, as you may see by the delay in this reply. So what will you ever really be able to know about me? Almost nothing, for to know me you must have long and practical knowledge of my habits; and what can I know of you through your letters, however frank and confiding they may be? Can they tell all the incidents of daily life, and of each moment of every day, which make up life, and which cause one to love, or to refrain from loving? You know nothing, and you never will know anything of my daily struggles in this incessant warfare; you would blame me exactly where I should know I had done the best; you would deceive yourself every moment in our enforced ignorance of each other, you of me, and I of you.

'Friendship is more enduring than love; for I consider friendship the highest stage of love, it is quietness and security in happiness.'

'Upon what foundation is religious belief grounded? Upon the consciousness of the infinite that is within us, which proves that there exists something beyond us, and that leads us by severe induction to religion—to hope. That strict alliance which we call a friendship, the devotedness which

we render to one human being, the certainty with which we excite confidence in our own power to realise all the magnificent promises and testimonies of friendship, must all take their rise in a source beyond ourselves.

'This is what I meant when I told you in one word that affections are all absolute; they may be perfect or imperfect, but they are infinite and have no limitations; and you prescribe boundaries to your affections, and expect that what comes between these wooden partitions shall be the infinite! I find within me so high a conception of what is great, that I cannot help finding your notions very poor and little.

'You ask whether a real woman's heart inspired me to write all you have read of mine. Do you imagine that if ever I had possessed the heart of any such woman, I should have dragged her before the public and placed on it the scaffold of a book?'

'You must pardon me for what I am about to say, but it is as impossible to prevent certain ideas presenting themselves to the mind, as it is to avoid breathing the air.

'Chance permitted me to know who you might be, and I refused to learn. I never did anything

so chivalrous in my life; no, never! I consider it is grander than to risk one's life for an interview of two minutes.

'Perhaps I may astonish you still more, when I say that I can learn all about you at any moment, any hour, and yet I refuse to learn because you wish I should not know.

'This situation is intolerable. I have all necessary strength of character for obedience; but the combat is in a ratio with the strength itself, and you ought to perceive to what torment you condemn me, if you admit curiosity to be a necessity to lively imaginations.

'An exchange of feelings and ideas between two persons unknown to each other seems to me impossible; there is something like deceit, it causes mistrust even in the midst of the sweetest fancies; there is a loss of dignity, a loss of greatness of mind. I have never endured it, although I may have no right either to give or to receive. However, whether it is a good or a bad feeling, I have it, and I am wounded.

'All this is suggested while looking at your sepia drawing; and while preparing a gift, precious in the sight of those who love me, and of which I am chary—I refuse it to all who have not deeply touched my heart, or who have not done me a

service: it is a thing of no value, except where there is heartfelt friendship. As this poor gift must pass through the hands of the binder, and as you cannot have it before the day after to-morrow, you may still strip all bitterness from my offering.[1]

'Do not imagine my request involves the need of seeing each other, or that I wish to be introduced to you.

'No, the most profound mystery is one of those *friandises* which delight tender souls, but mystery does not mean the unknown. Mystery is a refuge for those whom publicity exposes to the glare of full daylight.

'I have always thought everything to be possible, and easy, under the protecting shadow of mystery. Do not enter into a friendship with me. I require too much; I am like all those who struggle, who suffer while they work. I am exacting, suspicious, wilful, capricious; you would never be able to obey my caprices, which are, mind you, nevertheless, very logical thoughts, and not in the least fantastical; for what seems caprice to those who have no imagination seems to me the reasoning of the heart. Indeed, if I were a woman, I should love nothing so much as some soul buried like a

[1] The gift was the MS. of one of Balzac's works.

well in the desert, and which cannot be known except by finding the zenith of the star which indicates it to the thirsty Arab. But what greatness that would require!

'Let me tell you one of my niceties. Never write to one you love, without putting your letter into an envelope; there is something unpleasant in the idea that a beloved hand-writing has been in contact with the fingers of others. Always place a barrier between your thoughts and the letter which contains them.

'Now adieu. Be happy! I once more return like a horse to its collar-work.'

'When I last wrote to you I was suffering and I am still suffering under the weight of troubles and anxieties which break up my life; anxieties which I cannot confide to you, because before one can bestow this kind of confidence, one must feel sure that one is resting on a heart entirely devoted to one, it must be that of a sister who is more than a sister; and the want of confidence in me which you show is depressing! An attachment which should be unknown to all the world, into the secret of which no other person should be admitted, has always been one of my dreams, and

your heart has as much imagination as my imagination has of affection.

'No one except myself knows all the horribly true things that are contained in "La Duchesse de Langeais."

'My dream of affection has never been realised; I have found that all women desire to make a display of their affection. It is to them either a means of self-glory or else of self-sacrifice. For my part, I should prefer to possess a tender affection which should be a secret between two alone, a a secret which should remain a secret for ever, hidden and guarded like a miser's treasure. But it would seem that such celestial poetry is impossible to realise.'

'I do not ask you to let me see you, nor to become personally acquainted with you. I only ask you how we can ever become friends without this?

'If you knew my faculty for divination upon very small indications, you would understand that to me it is a matter of religion to abide by promises once given. If you knew that, like the slight traces which guide savages on the trail of friends or enemies, equally slight traces would be sufficient any day to guide me to discover all

about you, you would feel touched by my reserve, and would understand that I only ask you to give me a single footstep of firm ground on which I may stand; make it as barren as you please, but do not leave me longer to flutter between heaven and earth without a spot on which I may alight.'

'At the moment your letter reached me, I had been arrested, and condemned to six days' imprisonment, by order of the National Guard. I have only been able to read your letter; to answer it from this place would be difficult. I am obliged to transact by writing the most delicate affairs relative to matters of the utmost importance, such as my lawsuit, which comes on for decision on Friday. I shall not be able to get out before next Tuesday. How tainted is this prison! All the prisoners are herded together. I am in a corner, without fire, and it is very cold; added to this, the noise that goes on is indescribable. All here are only workmen and uneducated persons. I write you these few lines to spare you all anxiety.'

'Your flowers make my prison fragrant, this will tell you what pleasure they give me!

'But, dear and gracious Louise, what is this little *dolce*, compared to the four words with which you accompany it! My heart replies to you with all its chords, for you have touched many which are still young and vibrating.

'I am a little better off than I was, thanks to favour and money. I am in a room where I can see the sky sometimes. I have a fire (I was dying of cold), and I can work more comfortably. The hearts of those who are not embittered by misfortune respond to affection by affection; but if they are men of art, or of thought, or of thought and art combined, they possess the greatest of all treasures. Your bouquet is placed there in the very centre. When you show yourself so good and kind, so tender, so thoroughly defenceless, then I think you mine, I seem to know you, then I am ready to obey you in all things; but when you are otherwise, then I become bad. Why? I know not. Truly, I tell you these things as a child tells its mother. I cannot walk about, excepting in a room ten to twelve feet long, by six broad; but I can work here for eighteen hours out of twenty-four, as well as if I were at home.

'What does it matter where one is, if one does not live in one's surroundings, but in one's own thoughts?

'Will you not permit me to clasp your hand? Yes, why not?

'What are the questions I have not answered?'

'*Chère*,—In a few days, when you read the end of the work, of which you have the beginning, you will understand why I send you these few lines only, in which are condensed as many thanks as there are kind and gracious expressions in the last words of your last letter.

'I am knocked up. I live like a madman (particularly in neither eating nor sleeping); I am continually smoothing and polishing the beautiful white statue, which, when once finished, will leave me free to die quietly, if it shall so please God, for I am tired of life.

'Excuse this murmur. You would understand it, if you were here to see what I endure.

'Thanks, thanks for all your flowers, for those from the heart as well as for the vases.

'Do not think me ungrateful. I am only unhappy and continually occupied, without an hour to myself. This is the melancholy truth.'

'I am free, but more entangled than ever; for if I would save my publisher from certain ruin, it is necessary that the book, of which you have read half, should be finished in five days from now. I must work for five nights in succession! This has been my life for the last eight years. Beside this, I am harassed by the most thorny affairs; I must find enormous sums to extinguish the remainder of my obligations, and money affairs are pitiless; they will not wait, they command, they squeeze you. I shall not be quit of my entanglements for several months yet. Until then, those who love me must be content to hear nothing of me. I am like a stag at bay.

'Your roses have flowered in my detestable prison. I wish you a thousand tender things—as many as there are scents in the blooming buds.'

'*Cara*,—The lawsuit is won! Enemies, the literary world, the press, everything was against me; never were so many calumnies and infamous and groundless charges heaped up against a man.

'I hope you understand my silence. I have had to go about, and to work; I have not slept

thirty hours in fifteen days, and I have still to finish the last hundred pages of the "Lys," which I wish to have ready by Tuesday or Wednesday June 8. If you are not in Paris, hasten, on the receipt of this letter, to order a copy of "Le Lys" from Werdet, 49 Rue de Seine, for my publisher, has begged me not to take a single copy from him to give to my friends, as he needs every one for sale, which is to him like manna in the desert. I write to you in the midst of the printing and the battle of proofs.

'Did you hear from afar my thanks on May 16 and 20, two days which circumstances rendered horrible to me, and you sent me flowers which were as beautiful as I was sorrowful and overwhelmed?

'Yes, you did!

'Pardon me that my letters are so few and far between, but twice a week I go through an agony of thirty-six hours with the "Chronique de Paris," a paper whose editors are all ill, and I have its whole weight on my shoulders from the fact, that a part of my fortune is embarked in it. The rest of the time is taken up by my work and business. I have a lawsuit to be settled this week, the very day after *mi-carême*. If the judges dance overnight, they will not listen

to me. The day is dawning, and work is crying out for me; is not this a thorough working-man's life?

'There are such great necessities in the lives of artists, that you must live their lives to understand them, and whatever you may say, the world is an obstacle to their fraternity of soul.

'You are very happy to be able to employ yourself in art for Art's sake!'

'Do not ask me why you received no token of remembrance from me on August the 25th. On that August 25 I slept for fifteen consecutive hours. I was physically exhausted.

'The two days after my return from Italy I occupied in reading through and answering my letters (of which forty-eight had accumulated in the twenty-five days of my absence), in regulating my payments, and in finding the means to meet them.

'The fatigue of the journey itself was great, for I travelled in four days from Turin across the Simplon; to this has been added trouble of mind. A terrible sorrow lay awaiting me on my return; there amongst all the other letters was the letter

of mourning! I have lost the being whom I love most in the world.

'I sank under the blow. I slept fifteen or sixteen hours; for three days I was incapable of doing anything. I was as weak as a child of two days old. She whom I have lost was more than a mother, more than a friend, more than any human creature can be to another; it can only be expressed by the word *divine*. She sustained me through great storms of trouble by word and deed and entire devotedness. If I am alive this day it is to her that it is due. She was everything for me; and although during the last two years time and illness kept us apart, we saw each other through the distance. She inspired me; she was for me a spiritual sun. Madame de Mortsauf in "Le Lys" only faintly shadows forth some of the slighter qualities of this woman; there is but a very pale reflection of her, for I have a horror of unveiling my own private emotions to the public, and nothing personal to myself will ever be known.

'Well, in the midst of all the fresh reverses and troubles which have come upon me, the death of this woman has occurred.

'I have to work night and day. I have not an hour to sit down to weep, nor a night through which I may rest.

'Turn away, turn away from this abyss of misery, into which I have warned you not to venture; you and I only know each other through our mind; to take an interest in my affairs is only to incur suffering. There is still time for you to turn away from the most terrible life that ever weighed down a tender and confiding heart. And has not calumny done her utmost to distort my character, to represent me as very different from what I am, in order to detract from the respect which is due to my courage? You will meet with people who say I am mad; others, that I am very rich; others, that I am in prison for debt; others, that I am a man *de bonnes fortunes.* In short, there are a thousand representations of me, not one of which is true. Is not that to suffer? and when I meet with a soul good and kind, she keeps herself away from me. I have now, however, to be perpetually writing, running about, working, fighting at every point where I am menaced. Do not be exacting. Find here 'mille fleurs d'âme; la Saint-Louis peut-être tous les jours.'

'*Carina*,—On my return from a long and difficult journey, undertaken for the refreshment of my over-tired brain, I find this line from you, very concise, and melancholy enough in its solitude;

it is, however, a token of your remembrance. That you may be happy is the wish of my heart, a very pure and a very disinterested wish, since you have decided that thus it is to be.

'I once more take up my work, and in that, as in a battle, the struggle occupies one entirely; one suffers, but the heart becomes calmed.'

Here, apparently, terminated the episode of Louise in the life of Balzac. There must have been something good and genuine in her letters, or he would hardly have given so much thought and feeling to her; but she does not seem to have possessed the calibre of heart or character which would have enabled her to be the friend or the guardian angel of Balzac, and she saved herself from shipwreck and disaster, for she must have been shattered against the rocks of his life.

To M. Maurice Schlesinger, Paris.

July 1837.

My dear Master Schlesinger,—It would have been of no consequence at all, if a work of which I had the copy had been burned, and very important that those sixteen sheets should have been saved, as well as the other sheets, because we must now renounce 'Gambara,' of which we

possess the head and the tail, but not the middle, and it is difficult to write again what has once been put on paper. I live in fear of these accidents —for this is the third time a manuscript has been lost for me, and I have never done them over again. On Saturday I shall be able to tell you how long it will take to repair this damage; but if it should turn out that fifteen or sixteen sheets have to be re-written, there would be at least a fortnight required, and I beg you to recollect that I had given in my copy. This is why I told you that it was always prudent to have MSS. copied, so that there might be a duplicate in case of accident.

It is entirely impossible for me to write again what has once been written if it is lost, and yet I should like to save 'Gambara.' It is evident that if a printing office is to be burned down, my manuscripts must be there!

How was it that the copy was not taken out of the presses? Do you know whether it had been set up, whether there was any proof, or whether the proof or the copy may not be in the corrector's office. In any case it is a great misfortune, and it would never have happened if you had allowed me to set the copy for your journal in type at M. Bethune's, as I do for the others.

I must have the whole in type before I can correct it, and that would throw us into August.

Mille compliments.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

August 28, 1837.

However *furibonde* my letter, *cara*, might be, it did not mean that I was about to abandon your *protégé*. If you thought so, you do not know me yet. I have only one good quality, which is the persistent energy of rats, who would bite through a file,—if they lived to the age of the crows. I am about to try to set the affair straight, but it is not to be done in a day. He must learn.

Thanks for your letter. I am in horrible straits for money. To-morrow I may be delivered from all anxiety, if the matters I have in hand succeed, but also I may die in the attempt. It is very dramatic to be thus always between life and death; it is the life of a corsair; but the exercise of the muscles is not all that is needed. *Mille tendresses!* When you wish to have something from Paris which will cost twenty francs, let me know, and I will pay my debt; unless you would prefer an order through the post, which I would send to the address of M. Carraud, if you do not wish to

spend it, which is the wiser course. You are something of an artist, you have a sentiment for elegance, and elegance is expensive. For myself, I renounce it until the day comes when I shall have made my fortune.

Financial struggles disgust me. I send a shake of the hand to the Commandant Piston.[1] Those eight days at Frapesle were a great rest to me.

Mille fleurs d'amitié.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

November 1837.

My dear Laura,—Do not be concerned about me. My energy, for a moment beaten down, has revived, and I take some credit for having hidden my deep discouragement and grief from you all. I have made an arrangement with M. Lecou which will enable me to pay Hubert, and to satisfy the more pressing demands. We are selling the 'Femme Supérieure,' and I shall put aside something for the Gougis affair. My mother will receive what is due to her on December 10 at the latest.

But I cannot attain these results without going through a horrible amount of work. I intend

[1] A *sobriquet* given to M. Carraud by Balzac, in allusion to the great exactitude of the Commandant.

'César Birotteau' (a newspaper has bought it for twenty thousand francs) to be finished by December. I must spend twenty-five nights on it. I began this morning. Thirty-five to thirty-six sheets will be required, a volume and a half must be finished in twenty-five days. For the Gougis affair, and for the payments that will fall due, I shall have the produce of the two volumes of the 'Femme Supérieure' and the 'Maison Nucingen; they will be ready for sale in a month.

I shall not go away until the fourth part of the 'Études philosophiques' is finished; and I think we shall settle this affair, and that something will be left for me out of it.

Even if I am still left in my present dreadful condition of personal penury, it is none the less a palpable fact that in two months I shall have paid off fifteen hundred francs of debt, and with another success like that of 'César Birotteau,' all will go well. I must have some one near me who can be trusted. I put my foot on a rotten plank when I took Auguste; and I must make a bargain with Madame Michel, not concealing from her that she will have to endure some discomfort; but I may some day be able to reward her, by making her my housekeeper. At present, I can only give her eighty francs a month, board included. She will

have a tolerably pretty room, a little kitchen, and much trouble; but what may she not expect from me, to whom, besides his enormous wages, Auguste has cost so much?

This must be quickly done. I want to get rid of Auguste before the end of the week.

Make your mind easy! three months will not pass before some good offer will be brought to me like that affair of the 'Estafette.' 'César Birotteau' is to be given to all those who subscribe to this paper; they print five thousand copies. If it is a good work, what a success! . . .

Send me a line to say how you are. I am uneasy. Write to me, then, during these cruel twenty-five days, during which my life is the stake.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

(Fragment.)

January 1, 1838.

. . . . . .

This is what the lugubrious sound of that bell says to me, the last sound of a year about to hide itself in its grave.

Welcome to 1838, whatever it may bring us! Whatever troubles may be in the folds of its robe. What matters it? There is one remedy for all; this remedy is death,—and I fear it not.

But adieu, dear friend. My eyes are closing with sleep in spite of me. My hand can barely trace legible signs on the paper.

I embrace you, and press you to a heart devoted to you. A friendship as true and tender now in 1838 as in 1819. Nineteen years!

Friendly wishes to the Commandant. I kiss Ivan and Yorick.

I have read Ivan's letter with great pleasure.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia, Berditchef, Russia.

Paris: January 20, 1838.

I am out of suspense! I have just received your numbers 36 and 37. As to the 35th, please understand that it has not yet arrived. These two letters are stabbed with a thousand holes, traces of the terror caused by the pestilence. I perhaps owe the misfortune of the non-arrival of number 35 to these first fumigations. I am anxious you should know this, as it will explain the painful letter I wrote, and which I wish you had never received, as it must have caused you much pain. Your silence was to me a sorrow which over-topped and completed all the other troubles of my life. I am the subject

of such atrocious calumnies that at last I began to think you must have heard and had believed some of the enormous lies told about me; as for instance, that I eat human flesh, that I was about to marry either a *figurante* of the Opera or a fish-wife. I believe I have enemies, even in your house. I beseech you to receive with doubt everything you hear about me, except what I tell you myself. You know with what sincerity I tell you, hour by hour, day by day, every incident of my life.

As to the business which takes me to the Mediterranean, it is neither a marriage, nor an adventure, nor anything foolish, nor light, nor imprudent. It is a serious and scientific business, of which it is impossible to tell you anything, because I am pledged to the most profound secresy. Whether it turns out well or ill, I am risking nothing but a journey, which will be at least a pleasure or a distraction: it seems to me that I can embark in this enterprise without much anxiety. You ask me why, knowing everything (as you have the goodness to say), observing and seeing through everything, I am so often duped and over-reached? Alas! would you feel more esteem for me, if I were never the dupe of anything—if I were such a keen observer, so absolutely prudent, as to ensure that nothing unfortunate

could happen? Putting aside the question of feeling, let me tell you the secret of this apparent contradiction. Whilst my strength and faculties are night and day at their full stretch to invent, to write, to execute, to recollect, to describe—whilst with slow and painful, often wounded wings, I am traversing the moral fields of literary creation, how can I at the same time be occupied with material things? When Napoleon was at Essling, he was not in Spain. In order never to be deceived in life, in love, in friendship, in business, in relations of all kinds, dear Countess, recluse and solitary, it would be necessary to attend to nothing else, to be purely and simply a man of the world, a man of business, a financier. For the matter of that, I can see quite well when I am being deceived, and when I am about to be overreached, that such or such a man does or will betray me, or will disappear after shearing off some of my wool; but even at the very moment when I foresee or know all this, I am obliged to go and fight elsewhere; I see it while I am being carried away by the necessity of the moment, by pressing work, by some labour which would be lost if not finished. I often finish a cottage by the light of my house, which is burning down. I have neither friends nor servants, everyone flies

from me—I know not why, or rather I know but too well, because no one either loves or serves a man who works night and day, and who does not lay himself out for the advantage or amusement of others; who stays at home, and who must be visited if he is to be seen; whose genius, if genius he has, will not bear fruit under twenty years; it is because this man has identified his personality with his own works, and because all personality is odious, when it is not accompanied by power to give or bestow.

This will be enough to convince you that one must be either an oyster (do you remember this?) or an angel, to be able to attach oneself to any of these great human rocks. Oysters and angels are equally rare among human beings. I should have loved you as an astonishing curiosity, if I did not already bear you the deepest and strongest of fraternal affections. Believe me, I see both men and things as they are; no man was ever weighed down by a more cruel and heavy burthen than mine. Be not astonished if you see me attaching myself to beings [1] or things, which for the moment give me courage to live and go onward; and do not ever reproach me with the cordial which has helped

[1] He may refer in his own mind to his correspondence with Louise, amongst other things.—ED.

me over one stage of the road. What you write now about Walter Scott, I have said for the last twelve years. Byron is nothing to him, or next to nothing.

You are mistaken in the plan of 'Kenilworth;' according to the taste of all *composers*, and mine also, this work is the greatest, the most complete, the most extraordinary of all; in this point of view it is the best, as 'St. Ronan's Well' is a masterpiece of detail and of patient finish, the 'Chronicles of the Canongate' as regards sentiment; 'Ivanhoe' (the first volume be it understood) is a masterpiece of history; the 'Antiquary' of poetry; and the 'Heart of Mid-Lothian' of interest. All these works have a merit peculiar to each, and genius shines through them all.

You are right; Scott will grow in greatness when Byron is forgotten. I speak of Byron translated; for the original poet will endure, if only by his powerful inspiration and intense personality. Byron's brains never bore any other than the impress of his own personality; while the whole world sat to the creative genius of Scott, and, so to speak, saw itself reflected by him.

Show the nine volumes in 8vo. written during the past year to those people who complain of my idleness. You know the 'Ruggieri,' 'La Perle

brisée,' 'Les Martyrs ignorés,' are in the third issue of the 'Études philosophiques.'

M. Hanska is very simple-minded to suppose that women are given to falling in love with authors. I have not, and I never shall have anything to fear on this point; I am not only invulnerable, but also unwounded, pray make his mind easy on this subject.

I am about to set to work on my pieces for the theatre, on the 'Mémoires d'une jeune Mariée,' and perhaps on 'Sœur Marie des Anges;' these are my two favourite subjects at present, but all may be changed from one moment to another. I am also tempted by the continuation of the 'Illusions Perdues,' 'Un Grand Homme de Province à Paris," as well as 'La Torpille;' all this will be finished this year. You will be much astonished to see the stones I am bringing together, and piling up to make what you in your indulgent goodness call *the great edifice.*

You thoroughly deceive yourself, *my friend* is not my friend.

In spite of all that is said by those who call themselves *my friends*, the true (are there any?) as well as the false, be quite sure, *you* are cognisant of all I do, even at the very moment I am doing it. Last year I wrote to you from Sion,

that I intended to go away in the course of the winter; I did not leave Paris till after I had finished 'César Birotteau,' about a month ago. As I had been without sleep for five-and-twenty days, I have spent the last month in sleeping from fifteen to sixteen hours a day, and doing nothing during the eight hours of being awake; I am repairing my brain in order to spend it again.

Financial crises are terrible, they prevent me from amusing myself, as you, in your goodness, always so real and kind, wish me to do. Going into the world is very expensive, and I do not know if I shall be able to go to Sardinia in eight or ten days. You may be quite sure I shall not go without telling you.

You have not quite understood what I meant to say. I like a woman to be well informed; I like her to study in earnest; even to write books, if she chooses; but she ought to have—like you—the courage to burn her works. In spite of the excessive cold, four issues have appeared of the 'Peau de Chagrin;' also, in spite of the cold, I meet open cabs going at a foot's pace, in the Champs Elysées, which, considering the rigour of the season, seems heroic. These cabs appear to me more magnificent for love scenes than even those two lovers whom Diderot surprised at mid-

night in the street during a pouring rain wishing each other good night under the spout of a roof.

Pray do not end your letters by saying cruel things: such as, that I shall never visit Vierzschovnia; indeed, I shall, and very soon, believe me. I have not sufficient control over circumstances, which are very cruel just now.

I would tell you in what way my new publishers interpret the agreement by which I am bound, were not this letter too long already.

After a little idleness in the last month, after going two or three times to the 'Italiens,' as often to 'La Belgiojoso,' and sometimes to 'la Visconti,' (to speak in Italian fashion); after having had enough and too much of this society, I feel happy to quit it, and again to set to work at my fifteen hours a day.

When my house is built, when I am well settled, when I shall have gained some millions of crowns, then I promise myself, by way of reward, to visit you—not, as you say, for two or three weeks, but for two or three months. You will work at my comedies, while M. Hanska and I will ride to India on those famous smoky benches of which you talk so much.

The Princess Belgiojoso is very unlike other women, not attractive according to my idea. She

is pale, of an Italian whiteness, thin, and affecting the style of a vampire. She has the luck to displease me, she is certainly clever, but she shows it too much; she strives too much to produce an effect, and misses her object, from over care to gain her end. I saw her at Gérard's five years ago; she had then just come from Switzerland, where she had taken refuge. Since that time, through the influence of the Foreign Office, she has recovered her large fortune, which enables her to live and receive company according to her position. Her house is well appointed, and the society there talk well, on y fait de l'esprit. I went on two Saturdays, and I have dined there once, and this will be all.

To-morrow (Tuesday, March 21), I set to work to finish 'Massimilla Doni'; it exacts much musical study, I have engaged a good old German musician to come and play Rossini's 'Mosé,' over and over again to me.

I await with resignation all the platitudes and malicious nonsense which this work, 'Massimilla Doni,' will bring upon me. Looked at from one point of view, the subject is, I grant, open to criticism; it will be said, I am an immoral man; but if the subject be considered psychologically, it is, I consider, a marvellous work. There are still

people who persist in seeing nothing but a romance in the 'Peau de Chagrin,' though readers who can appreciate this work and understand its intention are becoming more numerous every day. In five years 'Massimilla Doni' will be understood as a beautiful explanation of the hidden processes of art. At first sight, to readers of the present day, it will only seem a novel more or less successful. Let it be understood from this what it is to bring forth works of art.

I must stop. Adieu, with a thousand tender expressions of friendship.

Remember me to all your surroundings. Think of me as a good faithful serf, as your most devoted *moujik*, who is unhappy when he is without letters, happy when he is allowed to take a share in your solitary and studious life, that quiet life so entirely devoted to your family and to your duties.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Marseilles: March 20, 1838.

Cara,—The date of this letter will tell you many things. In a few days I shall have to my sorrow one illusion the less, for it is always at the moment when on the brink of the realisation that one begins to lose one's faith. To-morrow I

set out for Toulon, and on Friday I shall be at Ajaccio, and from Ajaccio I shall proceed to Sardinia. I could not reply sooner to your good letter, but I thought I should have a moment to myself on reaching here.

If I fail in my present undertaking, I shall throw myself, body and soul, into writing for the theatre. You, who know how irksome all inactivity is to me, and that I should despise myself if I expected larks ready roasted to fall from the clouds, you cannot imagine all the obstacles I have met with. It seems to me as if the evils of being energetic were greater than those of being apathetic. It has required great courage in detail to conquer my difficulties. The few jewels I possessed are lodged *chez ma tante*; my mother has given me to the utmost, and a poor cousin has done likewise. At this moment I am within two steps of obtaining the result of my hopes; and I can assure you that if you think luxury is indispensable, you do not know me yet. I travelled five nights and four days on the *impériale* of a diligence, drinking only milk, at the rate of ten sous a day. I am now writing to you from an hotel in Marseilles, where my bedroom costs fifteen sous and my dinner thirty! When occasion calls for it, you see I can be ferociously

saving. I have no fear about my journey there, but what sort of a return will it be if I fail? Many nights of work will be needed to restore the balance and to keep my position! Come, then, *addio, cara*; I kiss your beautiful soft hands, I squeeze those of the Commandant, and I impress a kiss on the forehead of both your sons. If I am destined to be drowned in the Gulf of Lyons, remember that my last days of repose and peace were passed at Frapesle. *Tout à vous.*

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

Marseilles: March 20, 1838.

My dear, adored, and tender Mother,—Do not feel any uneasiness about me, and tell Laura not to indulge in any. I have enough money, and, *pace* the Laurentian wisdom, I shall have enough to bring me home. I have just passed five nights and four days on the *impériale* of the diligence. My hands are so swelled I can scarcely write. I shall reach Toulon to-morrow (Wednesday); on Thursday I leave for Ajaccio, where I shall arrive on Friday; eight days will be sufficient for my expedition. I could go from here in a merchant ship; but in that case it might be a chance whether I were a fortnight or three days on the voyage. It is also the equinox! Besides, I can get to Sardinia

in three days—for three times the expense, certainly.

Now that I am almost there, I begin to feel all sorts of misgivings; in any case, it would be impossible to stake less with the prospect of gaining so much!

I have only spent ten francs on the road.

I am in an hotel which makes me shudder . . . but with a few baths one may get over it! If I fail, a few nights' work will restore the balance. My pen will bring plenty of money in a month.

Adieu, dear mother; bear in mind that it is much more from the wish to put an end to the sufferings of those dear to me than from any desire of personal fortune, that I embark in this undertaking. When one has no funds, one can only make a fortune by ideas like those I am endeavouring to realise.

Ever yours, your respectful Son.

The object of this journey to Sardinia was one of those speculations in which Balzac too often engaged. The idea was, to work the scoria and the supposed mineral wealth left by the Romans in the mines formerly opened by them through the island.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Ajaccio: March 26, 1838.

Dear Countess,—This address will tell you that I am twenty hours from Sardinia, the goal of my expedition. I am awaiting an opportunity to cross over, and on my arrival I shall have to undergo a quarantine of five days.

During the few days I stayed in Paris I had to vanquish a thousand obstacles before setting out on my journey. Money was only to be obtained with difficulty, for money is a scarce article with me.

You will not be surprised to learn that this enterprise is a desperate stroke, undertaken with the hope of putting an end to the perpetual strife between myself and fortune.

I only risk a month of my time and four hundred francs in money against a good fortune.

M. Carraud has decided me. I laid my conjectures before him in scientific order, and as he is one of those great *savants* who do nothing, and who live in idleness, his opinion is unbiassed, and in favour of my ideas—ideas, which I can only communicate to you by word of mouth if I succeed, or in the next letter if I fail. Whether it is failure or success, M. Carraud says, that the idea is so ingenious that it deserves to take rank as a

splendid discovery. M. Carraud has for the last twenty years been the director of our military college of St. Cyr; he is the intimate friend of Biot, whom I have often heard deplore in the interest of science the persistent inactivity of M. Carraud. The fact is, that there is no scientific problem which could be laid before him which he would not explain admirably; but the fact of these mathematical souls is, that they judge life exactly as it really is, and, not seeing any logical conclusion, they wait for death to deliver them from time. This vegetating existence drives Madame Carraud to despair; she is full of soul and fire. She was stupefied with surprise to hear M. Carraud say, when I had laid my ideas before him, that he would come with me—he who never quits his house to look after his estate. However, at the last moment the natural disposition carried it, and he drew back. His opinion, however, raised my hopes to the highest pitch; and in spite of the danger of crossing the Gulf of Lyons in the full equinox, in spite of the five days' and four nights' journey in a diligence, I set out. I have suffered a good deal, especially from the sea; but here I am in the native town of Napoleon, swearing horribly at being obliged to delay the solution of my problem, within twenty hours' distance from the problem itself. I dare not

think of going to Corsica by the strait which divides it from Sardinia, for the land route is long, dangerous, and expensive, both in Corsica and in Sardinia.

Ajaccio is an insupportable place. I know nobody here, and, besides, there is nobody to know; civilisation is as primitive as in Greenland. I feel as if I had been wrecked upon a ledge of granite. I go out to look at the sea; I return to dine! I look at the sea again; I go to bed! I begin all over again. I dare not set to work, as I may have to start at any moment; and this situation is the antipodes of my character, which is all decision and activity.

I have been to see the house where Napoleon was born; it is a poor barrack of a place. I have, however, rectified several errors; his father was a rich landowner, and not a *huissier*, as several of his mendacious biographers have asserted. Again, when he reached Ajaccio on his return from Elba, instead of having been received with the acclamations and the general triumph of which historians speak, a price was set on his head. I was shown the part of the shore on which he landed. He owed his preservation to the courage and devotedness of a peasant, who took him away into the mountains, and concealed him there in an inaccessible retreat.

The person who told me these details is the nephew of the mayor who put Napoleon under the ban, and who roused the people against him.

I am going to Sassari, the second capital of Sardinia; but I shall not stay long. What I have to do there is not much at present. If I am not mistaken, the great question will have to be decided in Paris; it is only necessary to procure certain specimens.

Kind and clever *châtelaine*, do not puzzle yourself to find out what these may be, you will never guess!

I am so wearied out with the constant struggle of which I have often spoken to you, that it has at last come to this: it must be ended, or I must fall crushed in the strife. Here are ten years passed in incessant labour, which has borne no fruit; the only actual outcome has been abuse, calumny, lawsuits, &c. You have said the most beautiful things in the world to me on these matters; but I reply, that every man has only a certain amount of strength, of blood, of courage, of hope, and my store of all these is exhausted. You know neither the depth nor the extent of my sufferings; I cannot and ought not to tell you of them, and if I could I would not. I have renounced the idea of happiness, but in its stead

I must at least obtain peace. I have, therefore, formed one or two plans for making a fortune—the present adventure is one of them. If this fails, I shall try a second; then, I shall again fall back upon my pen, which, however, I shall not ever have laid down.

Yesterday I wished to write to you, but I was seized by an inspiration which dictated the plot of a comedy which you have already once condemned, 'La Première Demoiselle.'[1] My sister thinks it superb. George Sand, to whom I related it at Nohant, predicted a great success; this has set me to work upon it again. The most difficult part is done, that is to say, the *scenario*, the arrangement of scenes, entrances and exits, &c.

I undertook the 'Physiologie du Mariage' against the advice of the dear and enlightened being whom I have lost; and now I am about to undertake this piece during the delays of this journey, contrary to your counsel. ..

March 27.

I am not decided from what place I shall send this letter. It may be lost, or only reach you after long delays, of which I wish to spare you the anxiety. From Sassari I shall go to Genoa,

[1] *L'École des Ménages.*

and from Genoa to Milan; it is the least expensive route, as I shall not stay upon the road. At Milan there is a banker on whom I can depend, as also at Genoa. Do not, therefore, be surprised at any of the delays this letter may meet with. Once out of Corsica, I do not expect to have either time or opportunity to write to you. I shall keep this letter all ready, and send it as I can. The Mediterranean has been very dangerous; some of the merchants here think their vessels are lost. To incur the least amount of risk, I took the route from Marseilles to Toulon, and from Toulon I took the steamer which carries despatches; but notwithstanding, I have suffered greatly, and I have spent a great deal of money.

After much consideration, I think the best route to Odessa, as regards both safety and expense, will be to go by sea from Marseilles to Odessa, which may be done for five hundred francs. You see that, wherever I may be, I am thinking of how to reach my dear Virzschovnia.

Corsica is one of the most magnificent countries in the world, with mountains like those of Switzerland, though without its beautiful lakes. France takes no advantage, perhaps she neither knows nor cares to take any advantage, of this beautiful country. It is as large as several of our

Departments put together, and does not produce as much as one of them; it ought to have at least five millions of inhabitants, and scarcely possesses three hundred thousand.

However, we are beginning to make roads, and to use the forests, which contain immense riches. What the soil contains is unknown, there may be the most wonderful mines in the world, both of metals and coal, and marble quarries, &c. Unfortunately, the place is not only unexplored, but it is not even studied nor known, owing to the bandits and the state of savagery into which it is allowed to sink.

In the midst of my maritime miseries on board ship, I remembered the indiscretion I had committed in asking you to get me a hookah from Moscow or Odessa; I was possessed with a passionate rage for the 'Latakia' which Lamartine had brought with him, and which I had smoked with George Sand. It made me so ill that I have often laughed at the recollection. I am very sorry not to have found a hookah at Paris; it would have helped to pass time here, and to dissipate the weariness I feel, for I have also for the first time in my life realised the meaning of a desert land, it is a desert peopled by unknown beings who are almost savages.

"This morning I heard of a library said to be in existence here, and where from ten o'clock till three one may go to read—what? an anxious question this. For in this place there is no reading-room, no theatre, no society, no newspapers, none of that rubbish which betokens civilisation. The women dislike strangers; the men walk about all day smoking; a general absence of all occupation prevails, inconceivable until one has witnessed it.

There are eight thousand souls here, much poverty, and a complete ignorance of the most simple things. I rejoice in an absolute *incognito*, no one knows what literature means, or social life; the men never change their round velvet jackets, the utmost simplicity in dress prevails everywhere. When I came here, I had dressed with the intention of looking like a poor man, but amongst all these threadbare coats I look like a rich one. A French battalion is quartered here, the poor officers pace the streets from morning to night with dejected mien, not having anything to do.

Children swarm in every corner like gnats on a summer evening.

April 1.

I leave for Sardinia to-morrow, in a small *chaloupe* with oars.

I have just read over what I have been writing, and I see that I did not finish about the hookah; you understand, that if it gives you the least trouble, you are not to attend to what I have said. As to the 'Latakia,' I have just been told (laugh at me for a year) that Latakia is a town in Cyprus, which is not far from here; that a wonderful species of tobacco is grown there, which is called by the name of the place, and I am taking means to get a supply—so, cross this article out of the list.

Whilst walking along just now, I saw a poor French soldier who had lost both his hands by a bullet, only the stumps remaining. He gains his living by shaving people, writing, beating the tambour, playing on the violin, and playing at cards in the streets. If I had not seen this, I would never have believed it.

The library of Ajaccio had nothing in it. I have just been reading 'Clarissa Harlowe' over again; and I have read for the first time 'Grandison' and 'Pamela,' which I find dreadfully tiresome and stupid. What a coincidence in destiny, that Cervantes, Richardson, and also Sterne should each write only one book!

I have just had the misfortune to be recognised by an abominable law-student from Paris,

who has returned to be an advocate in his native country. He had seen me at Paris; an article in the 'Corsican Journal' in consequence.

This! when I wished to keep my journey as secret as possible! . . .

Alas! alas! how tiresome! I can no longer do good or evil without its being known! This is just the eighth day of my peaceful existence!

The town of Ajaccio is all one and the same house.

I have had a narrow escape. Had I come by any other route, and if I had come direct from Marseilles, you would have lost a faithful vassal and servant: there has been a terrible squall, by which three vessels have been capsized.

Monday, April 2.

This evening, at ten o'clock, a small vessel, and then five days of quarantine at Alghiero, a little port which you may see on the map of Sardinia. Between Alghiero and Sassari the second capital of the island, there is the district of Argentara, whither I go to see some mines, which have been abandoned ever since the discovery of America. I cannot say more now; when you read my letter in your studious little cabinet of your beautiful Vierzschovnia, I shall

have proved myself either a fool or a clever man; perhaps neither one nor the other, but only an ambitious man, who is deceived by an ingenious hope.

Addio, cara, I hope all is well with you, and that you are weeping a little over 'César Birotteau' at this very moment of my writing to you, and that you have already told me your feelings and impressions about this book. A thousand affectionate things to all whom you love. I have again put off writing to M. Hanska, because I intend to do so when at Milan, when I shall have received some tidings of you, but pray say to him all that is kind and friendly from me; and take for yourself the most attached and deepest feelings of my heart, which is your due, as my sovereign lady.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Alghiero (Sardinia): April 1838.

Here I am, after five days of tolerably fortunate navigation, in a vessel belonging to coral fishers, going to Africa. I have learnt from experience the privations of sailors; we had nothing to eat but the fish we caught, and which was boiled into an execrable soup; we slept on deck, and allowed

ourselves to be devoured by insects, said to abound in Sardinia. Arrived here at last, we are condemned to stay five days more, in quarantine, on board this little craft in sight of port. These savages will give us nothing! We have just gone through a terrific gale, and they would not allow us to fasten a cable to one of the iron rings of the port; but as we are Frenchmen, a sailor jumped into the sea, and fastened it on by force. The Governor came, who gave the order to take away the cable as soon as the sea should become calm, which according to their system of quarantine is absurd, for we have either given the cholera or we have not given it. It is a pure whim of the Governor, who insists that what he says shall be done, as a proof of his authority and his omnipotence.

Africa begins here. I see a ragged population, naked, and bronzed like Ethiopians.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Cagliari: April 17, 1838.

I have been all through Sardinia, and I have seen things resembling those related of the Hurons, or of Polynesia. A whole kingdom a desert; real savages; no cultivation; whole sa-

vannahs of palms or of cistus; goats everywhere, browsing on all the young shoots, and thus keeping vegetation breast-high.

I was on horseback from seventeen to eighteen hours at a time (I who had not mounted a horse for the last four years), and I did not pass a single dwelling.

I passed through a virgin forest, crouching on my horse's neck to save my life, for my road ran along a water-course, covered with creeping plants and branches, which would either have blinded me, broken my teeth, or carried away my head. Everywhere gigantic evergreen oaks, cork-trees, laurels, underwood thirty feet high—and nothing to eat. I traversed through the midst of all Sardinia, from Sassari here. It is the same everywhere. In one canton the inhabitants make a horrible bread by reducing green acorns to flour, which they mix with clay; and this within a stone's throw from lovely Italy! Men and women go naked, with only a scrap of cloth, a torn rag, to cover their nudity. I have seen numbers of creatures lying in heaps in the sun along the walls of their dens on Easter-day. Not a house has a chimney; the fire is made in the middle of the dwelling-place, which is carpeted with soot. The women pass their time in grinding and kneading

their acorn-and-clay bread; the men herd the goats and flocks; the whole soil is left untilled, and lies untouched in the most fertile country of the world.

In the midst of this profound and incredible squalor, there are villages where the inhabitants have costumes of astonishing richness.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Genoa: April 22, 1838.

I am now able to tell you about the principal object of this journey; I have been at once right and wrong about it. Last year, about this time, and in Genoa, a merchant told me that the apathy about Sardinia was so great that there were even close by the silver mines now in process of working, mountains of scoriæ which contained the lead left after the silver had been extracted. I told him to transmit to me at Paris some specimens of these scoriæ; and I said that, after they had been assayed I would return and demand from the authorities of Turin a licence to explore this heap along with him. A year elapsed, and my friend this merchant sent me nothing. The theory I went upon was: that the Romans and metallurgists of the middle ages were so ignorant of the process of extracting metals that it was tolerably certain that these scoriæ would still retain a large proportion

of silver. Now, a friend of mine, who is a great chemist, possesses a secret for separating gold and silver from whatever matters they may be mixed with, at very small cost. Whilst I was waiting for the promised specimens, my Genoese applied for and obtained the concession of the heaps of scoriæ for exploitation. And whilst I was going through this ingenious deduction, a house at Marseilles sent to Cagliari to assay the lead and scoriæ, and solicited a concession in rivalry with the Genoese. An assayer of metals from Marseilles found, on examination, that the scoriæ yielded ten per cent. of lead, and the lead yielded ten per cent. of silver by the ordinary process. Thus my conjectures were well founded, but I was unfortunately not sufficiently prompt in my movements. Also, on the other hand, misled by the information I received upon the spot, I went to L'Argentara, an abandoned mine, which lies in the wildest part of the island, and I have taken thence specimens of the minerals; it is possible that chance may befriend me better than my own calculations.

I am detained here by the refusal of the Austrian commissioner to *viser* my passport for Milan, whither I must go to raise money for my return. I did not expect to be absent beyond a

month, and now it is nearly fifty days since I left Paris—fifty days without hearing from you! As you know Genoa, you know its dulness. I am setting to work on my comedy. Do not scold me when you answer this letter—il faut consoler les vaincus.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Milan: 1838.

Dear Sister,—It would be too long to write to you now all that I will tell you in detail when we meet, which will, I hope, be soon. After very wearisome travelling, I am detained here in the interest of the Visconti family. The entanglements caused by politics were such that the remaining fortune possessed by them in this country would have been sequestrated, except for my endeavours, which have happily succeeded.

M. d'Etchegoyen, who is returning to Paris, is obliging enough to take charge of this letter.

As to the principal object of my journey, all was as I imagined; but the delay in my arrival has been fatal. The Genoese has a contract with the Court of Sardinia, made out in form. There is a million worth of silver in the scoriæ and lead. A house at Marseilles, with whom he has come to an agreement, has had them assayed. The idea

should not have been lost sight of, and a march should have been stolen on them last year.

But I have found what is as good, and even better. I will talk it over with your husband when I see him. It will be necessary to come here again with him and a mining engineer. You may, perhaps, make one of the party, for, thanks to the experience I have gained, we shall not spend much more than one spends at Paris in the same time; and as there is no Genoese in this affair, we may wait until we are quiet. I am therefore nearly consoled.

I have suffered much in travelling, especially from the climate; it is a heat which relaxes all the fibres, and renders one incapable of anything. I find myself wishing for our French clouds and rains; heat suits weak people only.

I thought much about you while moving about and suffering, but I saw our fortune in the distance, and that revived me. The mathematical brother will, I hope, agree that there cannot be a better speculation, and he will be as joyous as myself.

Communicate this letter to my mother. I am obliged to end it rather hastily. I have ink and a pen with which writing is impossible. I believe the Austrian Government contrives it, in order to prevent one from writing.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Milan: May 20, 1838.

Dear Countess,—You will understand all that is conveyed by the above date.

I have commenced the year, at the end of which I shall enrol myself in the great and numerous regiment of those men who are resigned to their lot; for I made a vow in those days of misfortune, struggle, and hope, which made my youth so wretched, that when I should have attained the age of forty years, I would give up the struggle, and would strive no more against anything whatever.

That terrible year began for me this morning, far from you—far from my own people, in the midst of a deep despondency, which nothing has yet dissipated, for by no efforts of my own can I alter my condition, and I can no longer hope that it will be improved by any fortunate accident. My resignation will be the daughter of weariness, not of despair.

I came here seeking the opportunity to return to France, and I have remained here to work out a book, the idea of which has suddenly inspired me after I had vainly sought it for years. I have never seen a book in which happy and contented

love is depicted. Rousseau uses too much rhetoric; Richardson preaches too much; poets are too florid and ornamental; romance writers are too much the slaves of facts; Petrarch is too full of his own images, of his *concetti*—he is more occupied with his poetry than with his heroine. Pope has perhaps made Héloïse indulge in too many regrets, he has tried to make her better than nature; and *le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.* In a word, God Himself, who created Love when He created human nature, is the only Being who has comprehended it; for not one of His creatures, it seems to me, has ever described the elegies, the fantasies, and the poems of this divine passion of which everyone talks and which so few have known. I desire to mark the termination of my youth—not of my youthful heart!—by a work[1] different from all my other works; a book apart which may be put into the hands of all women, be placed upon every table; a book in which I shall describe all the insensate fears, all the groundless jealousies, and all the sublimity of the gift of one's own being; there must be a fault, in order that there may be an expiation, a violent reaction, both worldly and religious, full of consolation, full of tears and delights. I wish

[1] *Les Mémoires de deux jeunes Mariés.*

this book to be without the author's name, like the 'Imitation.' I wish I could write it here; but I must return to France, to my workshop of phrases for sale. I can only sketch in this book during my rare moments of leisure.

Since I wrote last there has been nothing fresh. I have seen again the Duomo of Milan; I have made the tour of the Corso; but I can tell you nothing that you do not know already. I have made acquaintance with all the chimeras of the great chandelier of the altar of the Virgin, which I had only seen superficially before; also I have renewed my acquaintance with St. Bartholomew, who carries his skin like a cloak. I have again seen my delicious angels who support the choir, and that is all. I have heard the Boccabadati in 'Zelmira' at La Scala. For the rest, I have been nowhere; and Countess Bossi courageously accosted me in the street, and reminded me of our charming *soirées* at the Sismondi's, at the Chênes. You would not have known her again. This change in her has made me think very sadly of the change that must have taken place in me.

I have heard nothing of you these two months; my letters are at Paris, no one writes to me. I have wandered through places where the

post never comes; nothing has shown me so clearly that I am an animal which subsists only upon affection like a dog, neither more nor less. Skin-deep friendships do not suit me, they are fatiguing and serve only to show more vividly what treasures of affection are hidden in those hearts which give me shelter. I am not a Frenchman in the light acceptation of the word. The Hôtel had become insupportable, and by the grace of his Highness Prince Porcia, I am now living in a pretty room, overlooking some gardens, where I work much at my ease, as in the house of a friend, which he is to me.

Alfonso Serafino, Prince Porcia, is a man of my own age, much in love with a Countess Bolognini, more in love this year than last. He does not wish to marry, unless he could marry the Countess, who still has a husband from whom she is separated *de corps et de biens*. You see nothing embarrasses them, they enjoy a perfect independence. The Countess is very witty. The Prince has for a sister the Countess de San Severino, of whom I think I have already spoken to you.

Though I have only seen Florence through the small opening of three days and a half, I prefer it to Milan. If I were so fortunate as to be

loved by some woman, who would share her life with me, I would hide myself on the banks of the Arno; but after all, in spite of the romances of George Sand—and mine—it is rare to meet with a Madame Agoult, who runs about the world with Liszt, a Madame Dudevant, who has a separation *de corps et de biens*, and a Prince Porcia, with immense revenues which permit him to live where he likes. I am poor, I work like a convict, I cannot say to my Arabella (see the 'Lettres d'un Voyageur'): 'Come to Vienna, three concerts will make us ten thousand francs. Let us go to St. Petersburg, the keys of my piano will give us a palace!' I cannot quit this insulting Paris, with its libraries, and its printing machines; I must have twelve hours of stupefying work every day; I am in debt, and debt is a mistress who loves me a little too well. I cannot send her away, she puts herself between me and love, and friendship, and peace, and idleness, and every pleasure; this fate is too ugly to share with anyone, even my enemies.

There is but one woman in the world from whom I could accept anything, because I am sure I shall love her all my life long; but if she should not love me enough for this, I should kill myself whilst thinking of the part I might have played.

You see that in a few months I shall be obliged to take refuge in an existence *à la Fontaine.* Turn where I may, on all sides I can see nothing but difficulties, work, vain hopes and useless. I have not even the resource of two years at Diodati, upon the Lake of Geneva, for I am now too well seasoned to die of work, and who is there who would help me? I am like a bird in a cage, which has dashed itself against the wires; it remains motionless on its perch, for a white hand has stretched a soft green network above, which prevents him from breaking his head.

You will never believe how many dismal thoughts I have revolved, while looking on the happy aspect of Porcia's life here on the Corso of the Porta Orientale, two doors from the house of his Countess. I am thirty-nine; I am more than two hundred thousand francs in debt. Belgium possesses the million I have made. . . . I have not courage to finish, for it would be too cruel to transfer the sadness which is devouring me to this paper, so I make a sacrifice to friendship and keep it in my heart. To-morrow, when I shall have written some letters to my lovers, I shall be in better spirits, and I will come back to you calmed, and so wise that a saint would despair of being like me.

May 23.

Dear Countess, dear confidant of all my faults and mistakes, what shall I say to you? . . . Here I am more unhappy than ever; I am home-sick. France, with her grey skies, wrings my heart under this pure and beautiful heaven of Milan. The Duomo dressed in its lace stupefies my soul with indifference; the Alps tell me nothing; the sweet enervating air breaks me down; I go hither and thither without animation, not knowing what is amiss, only I feel that if I stay here a fortnight longer, I must die.

It is impossible to explain this condition. The bread I eat wants savour, food gives me no nourishment, water does not quench my thirst, the air does not refresh me, the loveliest woman appears hideous, even the common sensation caused by the sight and perfume of a flower is wanting. I have left my book, I have left my two lovers, to take them up again at some future day; the object now, of all others, is to traverse the Alps, to throw myself once again into the terrible but too alluring Parisian furnace, which one detests, but cannot live without.

What a horrible evil is home-sickness! It is neither to be described nor explained. I am only happy during the moments I am writing to you,

when I can say to myself, this paper will go from Italy to Russia; then alone is my dark existence under the sun interrupted, and this atrophy which relaxes all the bonds of life; it alone keeps my body and soul together. I have seen the Countess Bossi again. I am struck by the few resources possessed by Italian women; they have neither mind nor information; they scarcely understand what is said to them; criticism does not exist in this country. The only educated and witty woman I have hitherto met in Italy is La Cortanse of Turin.

I have been to see the frescoes of Luini at Saronno; they seem to me to be worthy of their reputation. The one which represents the Marriage of the Virgin has a peculiar suavity, the faces are angelic, a rare thing in frescoes, the tone of colour is sweet and harmonious.

No special opportunity offers to return to France, so I must fall back upon the tiresome and fatiguing way of the Sardinian and French *malles-postes.*

June 1.

My departure is arranged, if nothing occurs to prevent it, for the day after to-morrow. I believe I shall never have seen France with so much delight, although my affairs must be in great

confusion, owing to my long absence. If I am six days on my journey, it will make three months altogether, and seven months of literary inaction. Eight months of consecutive work will be required to repair all this. I shall go back to my little house to remain there, and to work for many nights.

June 5.

I went to the post to see if anybody had thought of the *poste restante*. I found a letter from the Countess Thürhein, who loved you so much, and whom you also loved. Your name was mentioned in the midst of a melancholy sentence, which touched me much; for in my present state of nostalgia you can imagine what the recollection of the Landstrasse and the Gemeindegasse was to me.

I sat almost an hour on a bench, my eyes fixed on the Duomo, fascinated by what the letter recalled. Ah! what do we not owe not only to those who cause us such sweet and pure remembrances, but to the fragile paper itself which awakens them! You must remember I have had no tidings of you for these three months, through my own fault! You know why it has been so, though you will never know the reason why this thirst for fortune has come upon me.

I shall answer the worthy *chanoinesse* without

telling her the emotion she caused by her letter, for there are things it would be difficult to explain even to this good German lady; but she spoke of you with so much feeling, it will enable me to say that what with her is friendship, is with me a worship without end.

She said so prettily that *one* of my friends, not the *real* one, but the *other*, is now at Venice! She moved me to tears. What a perpetual regret to be always so close to you in thought, and so far from you in reality! Ah, dear fraternal soul, the Duomo was very beautiful and sublime on the fifth of June at eleven o'clock. I lived through a year there. Adieu! I leave here to-morrow, and in ten days I will answer all your letters, treasures which have accumulated during this horrible journey. God keep you and yours! Do not forget a poor exile who loves you well.

Paris: June 10.

I despatch from Paris my letter begun at Milan. I have returned in perfect health; my head is as refreshed as if I had never written anything. I found three long letters from you, they are the most delightful entertainment possible for my heart and for my mind; I fished them out from among the two hundred awaiting my return.

Before beginning to write to the public, I wish

to have the luxury of a long conversation with you.

Yes, make no excuses, nor the little gesture I know so well—you need not cover your eyes with your little round white hands—our most renowned contemporary critics could not have been more wise than you are in what you say, and you have set me about considering to such purpose, that I am busy working and remodelling my ideas on that subject. You will believe me, for you know that if I am sincere in anything, I am especially sincere in all that concern art. I have none of the paternal nonsense which puts such a cruel bandage over the eyes of so many authors; and if 'La Vieille Fille' should prove worthless, I should have the courage to expunge it from my work.

I have laughed heartily at what you tell me about the Russian heirs to millions, and this story they have told you has also been set afloat in Milan; it was asserted and insisted upon, *mordicus*, that I had recently married an enormously rich heiress, the daughter of a silk-merchant; in truth, there is no absurd story of which I am not the hero, and I will amuse you greatly by their narration when I next see you. Your three excellent letters, read consecutively, have refreshed my soul with

pure and good affections, as much as the beneficial waters of the Seine have refreshed my body; and, believe me, I felt much more need to go through these pages, full of your adorable little writing, than to seek physical repose after my fatigues. I had a horribly beautiful journey; it is well to have done it, though it resembles our defeat in Russia. Happy he who has seen the Beresina, and who finds himself standing safe and sound on his feet afterwards.

I passed the St. Gothard, with fifteen feet deep of snow upon the road I travelled; the path was altogether obliterated, and the high posts which indicate the bridges thrown over the torrents could not be discerned any more than the torrents themselves. I was nearly lost several times, in spite of eleven guides. I ascended Mont St. Gothard at one o'clock in the morning by a sublime moonlight; I saw the sun rise over the snow-peaks. One ought to see that once in one's life. I descended so rapidly that in half-an-hour I passed from the twenty-five degrees of cold on the summit to I know not how many degrees of heat in the valley of the Reuss. I had the horrors over the Devil's Bridge, and towards four o'clock I was crossing the Lake of the Four Cantons. You see I renounced going round by Berne and Neuchâtel, and returned by Lucerne and Basle. I went by

Ticino and Como, thinking to save time and money; and, on the contrary, I spent both enormously, but I had value for my money. It is a superb journey. I must return to see these beautiful mountains in summer time under a new aspect.

Thus my excursion has been like a dream, but a dream where the figure of my faithful companion was always beside me, the one I have told you about, and who never suffered from the cold.

I have now returned to set seriously to work. I shall publish, one after another, 'La Femme Supérieure,' and 'Gambara.' I shall finish the 'Illusions Perdues,' 'La Haute Banque,' and 'Les Artistes.'

Perhaps, after this, I may come to see you in the midst of your steppes; or I may be able to write a theatrical piece, which may please you, and its success may end my financial miseries.

This is my plan of campaign, *bella cara Contessina.*

June 12.

I am truly egotistical; I began to talk of myself whilst replying to what first struck me, in your letters. I ought first to have told you how glad I am to find you are released from the sorrowful and sublime office of sick-nurse which you have exercised so skilfully and courageously. Your

reproach against me, that I am hard, has given me great pain, for a phrase. What I said, believe me, was only the expression of my desire that you might become more and more perfect, and perhaps this desire was somewhat foolish, for contrasts are at times necessary in a character already perfected. Whatever happens, I will never complain again, even though you should accuse me unjustly, believing that a friendship so old and so true as ours can only be ruffled on the surface.

No doubt, a fresh issue of the 'Études philosophiques,' which contains the 'Ruggieri,' will be published. I have looked through the passages you indicate; they clearly show the state of anguish in which I was when I wrote them, as well as the weakness of an over-tasked brain. All you say is only too true, there is much that will require to be written afresh. I do not know what you would have said of this poor preface to the book, called 'Illusions Perdues.' I must write the continuation and finish the work.

The solitary and monotonous existence you describe with so much charm and poetry tempts me much. After such a journey as mine, such a description has an infinite charm. I owe to you the only burst of laughter, a little too Homeric perhaps, which I have had for a long time. How

good of you to send me that passage in your letter in answer to the one from your cousin, from which you have been kind enough to transcribe the sugar-plums.

In spite of your admiration for her, I still assert you are completely in error in believing that she loves you. I believe the woman is not sincere; truly, I do not know what to say to her, for I am as stupid when I have nothing to say from my heart, as I am often when it is over-full.

To Madame Hanska.

Paris: June 15, 1838.

I have been home a week, and during the whole week I have been vainly trying to take up my work; my head refuses all intellectual effort. I feel it is filled with ideas which cannot be expressed; I am incapable of fixing my fancy, or of constraining it to consider a subject on all sides, or of deciding upon any form of treatment. I know not when this imbecility will cease, perhaps I am out of practice. When a workman leaves his tools for any length of time his hand stiffens, he is, so to speak, divorced from his tool; he must again begin, little by little, to restore that brotherhood between himself and his work, which

is due to habitual use, and which unites the hand to the tool, as much as the tool to the hand.

June 18, 1838.

I went last night to see 'La Camaraderie.' I think there is much that is very clever in the play. Scribe knows his business, but he is ignorant of art. He has talent, but he does not possess dramatic genius; and besides, he fails altogether in style. I met Taylor, the Royal Commissioner, near the Théâtre Français. He has just brought four hundred pictures from Spain, all of the finest, at the cost of a million. In a few moments it was settled that he would undertake to get a play of mine accepted, read and played, without telling the name of the author until the last moment. There are to be as many rehearsals as I please. In short, he will save me all the worries which accompany the acceptance and representation of a play. Now what shall it be? Oh how much a few conversations with you would help me! for you are the only person—now that I am separated by death from her—that friend who educated, followed, strengthened all my attempts—you are now the only being on whose counsels I have any reliance. Yes, those in whom the heart is as noble as their birth, who

have contracted the habit of nobility of thought in all things—these are the only persons who have the right to be my judges and my critics. Adieu for to-day, for I must compel my thoughts to the theatre, and I must confine myself to the dramatic limitations, in order to decide on what I shall bestow life or death.

The law about the National Guard has driven me to take a strong measure; no less than going to take up my abode in a country house two leagues from Paris, but this time I shall be in a house of my own. Then I shall seriously set myself to work my sixteen hours a day for three or four months. *A bientôt.* My best regards to all your circle; take all that is least unworthy in them for yourself.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

1838.

'M. H. de Balzac, at Les Jardies, near Sèvres.'

Thrice dear friend!—the above will be my address, for a long time. My house is almost finished, and I am in it. Three rooms, one above the other; the ground-floor is the drawing-room, the first floor my bed-room, and the second floor my work-room; the three communicate with each

other by a ladder dignified by the name of staircase; the whole is the habitation of your friend. A serpentine walk in a little acre of Paris ground enclosed in walls surrounds the house, where flowers, trees, and shrubs will be planted, but not till November next. Sixty feet away from the house is a building, containing the stables, coach houses, kitchens, &c., a large apartment and servants' rooms. This constitutes the Jardies.

The parrot's perch on which I rest, the little garden and the offices, all are situated in the midst of the valley of Ville d'Avray, in the commune of Sèvres, close to a station on the Versailles railway, behind the park of Saint-Cloud, half-way up the hill, looking south; the loveliest view in the world. A pump, which is to be covered with clematis and other climbing plants; a pretty spring, which contains the future life of *our* flowers; perfect quiet; and—forty-five thousand francs increase of debt! You understand? Yes, the folly is perpetrated, and complete! Do not say anything, it must be paid: at present I work all night!

I have been to Sardinia, I am not dead, and I have found the twelve hundred thousand francs which I imagined would be there, but the Genoese

had already clutched them, by means of a *biglietto reale* sent three days before my arrival. I had a moment's shock, there was no more to be said. To prevent my journey being utterly useless, I stayed three months to arrange the affairs of Count Visconti. A month ago I returned, and have been overwhelmed ever since with business of all kinds. Every morsel of ground I wanted, meant ten separate proprietors, ten contracts, ten negotiations. I am in a wasps' nest, and only able to take out one wasp at a time. Some day you shall hear my travels, it is a curious story.

You now know the present state of affairs; everything is worse, debts and work. At least, I live more cheaply, and nearer Paris than when in it. Ten minutes and ten sous take me there at any time. I now neither fear visits nor interruptions, I am at home and happy. I have gained a new energy in this mode of life. Everything is arranged to live elegantly in a small way, sociably and without folly. Five hundred feet from the Jardies, the woods of Versailles begin. You cannot imagine how fresh and pretty and graceful everything around me will be in a few years; but quantities of money will have to be earned.

Addio, cara! Another time I will say more.

I have written nearly four pages; how can it be otherwise with a sister?

Yours heartily.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Les Jardies: 1838.

I am working at once for the theatre and the publishers, the drama and the book. This will explain why I have not written to you, but I could only have told you that the recollection of you was a pleasure worthy of the friends of Monomotapa.

I know that Auguste has returned; he has experienced many disappointments, but I would wish him to be repaid all I owe to him, that he may know that I understand the value of a heart like his, and of such a friend as he has been to me. My debt to him stands first of all my other debts, although I am almost broken down by a necessity which has never loosened for me a single button of her waistcoat of steel since my birth. I have more faith than ever in my work; I have the promise of twenty thousand francs from one of the theatres for the piece I have in hand, and I am about to organise my dramatic labours on a great scale, for they are just now the only things that pay; books no longer give any profit.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Les Jardies: 1838.

Cara,—Many grateful thanks for your kind letter. However pressed with hard work the poor labourer may be, he would rather keep his grain in his hand than not find time to say to so warm and true a friendship, I feel it through all my pores.

Have no remorse about the hours I lingered at Frapesle; they were two to one against me at the other end, and the Genoese had taken his measures as soon as my back was turned, and began to bribe the people about the Court. The mischief was done before I started. It would be a great happiness to have M. Périollas near me. I have remarked and esteemed his character—there are few like him. He had an outburst of feeling one day on hearing of my misfortunes which counted for ten years of friendship. Thus, although our actual intercourse has not been frequent, I had the intention of inscribing his name as well as that of the Commandant, on some *Scène de la Vie Militaire*. I am indebted to him for some valuable hints. He is one of the very few in whom I recognise a great talent for writing. I would willingly take him for a counsellor.

Do not hesitate to come to the Jardies as often as you like; though hard work abides there, you will always be welcome, you will not disturb the solitude, you are one of the minds which fill it with good things. Alas! quietude, never! You will be frightened when I tell you that, since my return, four volumes, and three or four plays are finished or on the stocks, besides money troubles enough to frighten you still more, and most deadly annoyances.

I declare I have dismissed all my hopes, all my luxuries, all my ambitions! I desire only the simple and peaceful life of a *curé*.

A woman of thirty, possessing three or four hundred thousand francs, who could take a fancy to me, would find me willing to marry her, provided she was gentle, good-tempered, and well-looking; she would pay my debts, whilst my work would in five years' time have repaid her. Enormous sacrifices would be imposed on me by this course, but it would be better to marry than to perish. I have no certainty of life; at my age it is impossible to continue such work as I am obliged to do without running the risk of exhaustion, which is the same thing as death. I only live now to fulfil certain sacred obligations. I am hoping for some success with the theatre, but I

have had no time as yet to think over plots, or to work them out as I would desire. In short, although the muse of labour is a companion that makes solitude endurable, I feel more and more the necessity of having someone with me who will not quit me. But I only catch a glimpse of this hope through the fog of my labours; and they will be so enormous for the next four or five months, that I do not think I shall have two hours' real leisure for myself.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Sèvres, Les Jardies: July 1838.

Dear Countess,—I have to-day received your letter No. 44, and also three others a month ago. In reply to these, know, first, the 'Widow Durand'[1] is no more, the poor woman has been killed by the newspapers, which have carried their unworthy treatment of me so far as to betray a secret, which for any man of honour ought to have been sacred.

Learn also, that I am settled for good at Sèvres, and my little tenement there is called 'Les Jardies;' therefore, 'à M. de Balzac, les Jardies, Sèvres,' will be my address for a long time.

[1] This was the name under which Balzac had concealed himself during the pressure of his pecuniary difficulties.

You might well say in your last letter, I should be here a month before I could even turn round and make a place for myself on my rubbish-heap. I am still in the midst of wet plaster, masons, terrace makers, painters, and other workmen.

I am come back full of the book of which you know—it is not yet in existence; it has never yet been written—but I should like to be able to write it. I find waiting for me the stupidest mercantile interests, the two volumes of the 'Femme Supérieure,' of which some pages are still wanted before it can be sold, and which I must fill in with the beginning of the 'Torpille.'

I find the contractor, who is building my house, at his wit's end. I find the whole pack of my debts in full cry, and annoyances of all sorts. I was a month going about hither and thither, I took a week to rest, my journey home being very fatiguing. I narrowly escaped an attack of ophthalmia on Mont Cenis, by the sudden change within a few hours from the heats of Lombardy, to the twenty degrees of cold, snow, and an icy wind on the Alps.

August 7.

During fifteen days of interruption this letter has lain on my table, without my being able to tell

you that on Mont Cenis the wind drove the fine and pricking particles of a blinding dust into my eyes. I know that my letters, in which I so minutely narrate every incident in my life, give you almost as much pleasure as I have in writing them to you. I feel as though I were talking to you, you seem to listen, and even to answer me; I can hear you; your voice sustains and refreshes me, whilst mine communicates to you my annoyances, my dreams, my mistakes, my terrors, my weariness, and my labours.

Your existence is calm, sweet, and religious; it rolls slowly along, like a living spring on its bed of white gravel between two green and flowery banks; my existence is a torrent, noise and stones only, and without ceasing. I really am ashamed of this exchange to which I bring nothing but troubles, and you bring treasures of peace. You are patient, and I am turbulent; you are resigned, and I am discouraged, sometimes even desperate. You did not, then, recognise the last cry I uttered at Milan. I was suffering a double *nostalgie*, and I had not, against the worst of them, even the resources that I have here. Here the moral and physical combat, debt and literature, have something exciting that carries one away; you can perceive how I am interrupted in the middle of a

word one night, and am not able to resume our talk for the next fortnight.

I have a world of things to say to you; and in the first place, deliver your soft, tranquil life from a pre-occupation like that of the search for a hookah. Figure to yourself that it all arose from my ignorance! I thought you resided near Moscow, and I thought that Moscow was the principal mart for this kind of things; that was all. Then I had the desire to possess something from you, as a *chasse-chagrin*. If it has given you the smallest trouble, I shall detest the sight of it. I am here at the Jardies, after all, in spite of the recommendations of my doctor, who has positively forbidden me to live amongst the wet plaster. My house is situated at the back of the mountain, or rather hill, of St.-Cloud, close to the King's Park. On the west, I take in all Ville d'Avray: on the south, I look along the road which follows the base of the hills, where the woods of Versailles begin; on the east, I look over Sèvres, and my eyes wander over a vast horizon, beneath which lies Paris, whose smoky atmosphere renders hazy the celebrated slopes of Meudon and Belleville; and beyond which I see the plains of Montrouge and the Orleans road, leading to Tours. All is of a strange mag-

nificence, and a ravishing contrast. The bottom of the valley of Ville d'Avray has all the freshness, the verdure, the heights, the shadow, of one of those Swiss valleys which pleased you so much; it is, besides, ornamented by beautiful buildings. The side opposite to that which I am describing shines with bright lines in the distant horizon, and it has at this distance all the appearance of the open sea, . . . woods also, and forests everywhere; to the north are the beautiful trees of the royal habitation. At the end of my property is the station of the Versailles and Paris Railway, of which the embankment heads the valley of Ville d'Avray, without hiding any of my prospect.

My own possessions measure about an acre of ground; it is terminated by a terrace a hundred and fifty feet long, and is surrounded by walls. Nothing is yet planted; but this autumn I hope to turn this little corner of earth into an Eden of plants, sweet-smelling flowers, and shrubs. In Paris and its neighbourhood everything of this sort can be had, provided you can pay for it. I shall have magnolias twenty years of age, limes of sixteen, tall poplars, tall birches with their balls of turf round them, chasselas brought in baskets, which will be ready for gathering during the year. Oh, how admirable is this civilisation! Truly, if

the peace and progressive prosperity of this reign are continued in succeeding ones, it can scarcely be foreseen to what degree of comfort and material beatitude this happy country may reach, especially if circumstances do not hinder the progress of nature, who has treated France with such mother-like partiality.

At this moment my plot of ground is as bare as my hand; but it will be astonishing in May next. I am going to obtain two acres more, for a kitchen garden, orchard, &c. Thirty thousand francs are needed for this, and I wish to earn that amount this winter.

The house itself is like a parrot's perch, one room in each storey, of which there are three. On the ground floor is a dining-room, on the first floor a bed-room and dressing-room, and above that is my work-room, in which I am at this moment writing to you at midnight. The whole is flanked by a staircase, which much resembles a ladder. All the way round on the first floor is a gallery, supported on brick pilasters, where one may walk under shelter. This little Italian pavilion is painted brick-colour, with chains in stone at its four corners; the appendix containing the staircase is painted in red and white stripes like ticking. There is only room here for me. Sixty

feet behind, towards the Park of St. Cloud, are the offices, consisting, on the ground floor, of a kitchen, scullery, and larder, &c., a stable, coach-house, bath-room, wood-house, &c., &c. On the first floor is a large apartment which can be let, if I wish; on the second floor servants' rooms, and one for a friend. I have a spring of water equal to the celebrated one of Ville d'Avray. It comes from the same source; and a wall surrounds the whole of my possessions.

I shall stay here till my fortune is made; and I am already so pleased that when I have secured the capital of my tranquillity, I believe it is here I shall end my days in peace, dismissing, without sound of drum or trumpet, all my hopes, aspirations, ambitions, in fact, everything. My debts and my money annoyances remain the same; the increase of my courage is drawn from the smallness of my wishes. To-morrow, then, I will continue my gossip, and send it to you with all friendship, homage, and remembrances.

Wednesday, August 8.

There are many things I want to say to you; but your last letters are in Paris, and before I could go there to fetch them, the delay would be too great; so they must wait for the next letter, which will speedily follow this. But amongst

other points which struck me, I was painfully impressed by the excessive melancholy of your religious feelings. You write severely, as if I believed in nothing, and as if you would send me to the Grande Chartreuse to be converted. For some time past the burden of your letters has been, 'This world has no interest for me; I have 'nothing more to do with it.' You will hardly guess how many inferences, perhaps ill-founded, I draw from this state of mind; but as you always say sincerely what you feel, you only express what is really passing within you. You ought to be frank with an old friend like me. Even at the risk of displeasing you, I say boldly that I would like to see you in another frame of mind; to think of God thus, is to renounce the world, and I cannot understand why you should renounce it, when you have so many ties to keep you, and so many duties to fulfil in the world. My own reflections on this matter are not what I can exactly communicate to you; they are, moreover, very egotistical, and concern no one but myself. They are like those I expressed at Milan; they displeased you because, as you said, they disturbed you. . . .

I see clearly that happiness will never be mine, and who would not feel some bitterness with this thought continually and unceasingly in his heart?

I was very unhappy in my youth, but Madame de Berny compensated for all, by an absolute devotedness, which was never recognised in all its worth until the grave had seized its prey.

Yes, I have been spoiled by this admirable woman; I recognise the fact, whilst endeavouring to perfect what she merely indicated or sketched out in me.

I was about to talk to you about some new vexations which have arisen, but again I must be silent; I know not in which, of my letters, there is a promise never to speak again of my annoyances, only to write to you when everything seems going smoothly, and to confide my lamentations to the clouds which go northwards; when you see them very grey, they will speak to you. How many sorrowful confidences have I not stifled! Believe me, there are many corners which I conceal from you, where, if you penetrated, you would be surprised to find, in spite of so many agitations, pre-occupations, labours, travels, and even as you say *inward dissipation*, one fixed idea, a wish, which every day grows more intense, and which certainly is not without some little force, though it cannot displace mountains, the miracle which is promised to faith. My friends have very often seen me turn pale and rush to the window, at

the noise of the cracking of a whip; they ask the cause, and I reseat myself, palpitating and gloomy, a state which lasts for days. These feverish starts, accompanied by internal commotion, break and crush me; there are days when I imagine my fate is being decided; something lucky or unlucky is happening to me, something is coming to pass, and I am not there to receive it. These things are the poetical foolishness of a poet, only to be understood by poets. There are also days when I take all material existence, and all that surrounds me as if it were a dream, so contrary to my nature is the existence I am leading. Will all that cease in the midst of the fields? Will they always give me calm? Shall I have secured my material life under which I must press down the life of the heart, which I see is unused and lost in spite of the ten best years of life which still remain for me? for my passion is a despotism of which you can form no idea; it requires all or nothing. I am in that respect like a school-boy on the first day of leaving school. What can I say to you? I am very much to be pitied, and I will not accept pity; I have never taken the trouble to clear myself from the stupid falsehoods and scandalous gossip which have so liberally given me the credit of being in the good

graces of all the most charming women in Paris, to which the coquetries of Madame de Castries and of some others gave rise. I even accept the accusation of being a coxcomb. I let absurdity pile itself on absurdity, in order that it might hide the real man, who is possessed by one single idea, by one single feeling, and by all that relates to it.

I am at this moment engaged in thinking out a portion of a love story which will stand alone.[1] I wish to describe the soul of a young girl before the invasion of that love which conducts her to a convent. I have made her in her youth abhor the Carmelites, amongst whom she thought of nothing but the world and its gaieties, without any misgiving that misfortune would bring her back to the convent, which would be to her an asylum and a refuge after having once been an *ennui* and torment. As she has spent eight years in a convent, she arrives in Paris as much a stranger as Montesquieu's Persian. I shall made her judge and describe modern Paris, by the force of an idea, instead of using the dramatic method usual in our novels. It is a new mode of treatment, and if I succeed I will undertake that you will be pleased with me.

[1] This fragment, which was to be called *Sœur-Marie des Anges*, was never written.

It is, however, very difficult to take up my life of labour again, to rise at midnight, and write till five P.M. This is the first morning I have passed without dozing between six and eight o'clock. Six months of interruption have caused much ravage in my literary life. There are powers which come by habit, and when the habit is broken, goodbye to the power!

I hope to stay here three or four months, working to repair the breaches caused by my absence.

Have you read, in the 'Lettres d'un Voyageur,' the passage of the Moulin Joli? . . . I saw that engraving at *her* house, without then knowing to what a terrible incident it had given rise: a terrible one for ill-assorted couples. Well, the Jardies is the 'Moulin Joli,' without the woman. If you do not know this story, read it; it is the best George Sand ever narrated.

The newspapers will have told you the deplorable end of the poor Duchesse d'Abrantès; she has ended as the Empire ended. Some day I will explain her to you, it will occupy an evening in the country at Vierzschovnia.

I shall soon be able to reply to your Bucolics, on your beautiful plants, flowers, and grass, by idylls on mine; but, alas! there is all the differ-

ence in their quantity! You possess a hundred thousand acres, where I have square feet.

Do not forget to tell me about your health, your beauty, your studies—in short, about all you are doing in the depths of your steppes; you would do this, if you could know even a little part of the immense value I place on the smallest minutiæ of your life as reigning *châtelaine.*

Come, I *must* say *addio!*

To the Duchess de Castries, Paris.

Sèvres, Aux Jardies: 1838.

At this moment I am here busy with workmen finishing a house like a scene in 'l'Opéra Comique,' in which I intend to work far from the world, and where those who love me will have to come and find me, if they desire to do so. I told you once that I should prepare a solitude for myself, in case I should fail in the object of my journey, and I have failed. I found on my return so much work, so little of a house, so much money to pay and so little work in my portfolio, that I am just now working from midnight till five o'clock in the evening of the next day. My position is so little to be understood by those whose life is all arranged for them, and who are able to

do as they please, that I ought not be surprised if what I am saying is met with astonishment or even by incredulity.

You see it would be difficult for me to obey your commands, and to go to find you at Dieppe. I have a constitution of iron because I have never sinned against it, except in the service of the Muses, which you never will believe. In the horizon of the landscape which is spread beneath my windows, can be seen the Plain of Montrouge, which has the appearance of a calm sea. The sea in a storm is within myself; I have therefore under my hand a small portable Dieppe. But as regards yourself, my loss is irreparable. When I have the happiness to see you again, you will be obliged as a sincere friend, to say to me, 'You were quite right to remain where you are,' more especially when I shall murmur in your ear the true reasons that chained me here.

I send you a thousand tender and affectionate *hommages*, and you know how warm and sincere they are, in spite of the quarrel which you persist in carrying on with the most devoted of all your servants.

To M. Émile de Girardin, Director and Editor of the 'Presse,' *Paris.*

Sèvres: November 1838.

Sir,—You could not be aware that the terms of my engagement have been more than fulfilled by me. You had engaged to take without alteration or omission, three articles by me, the length of which was fixed beforehand, and the clauses to this effect are in your own handwriting. I myself engaged to contribute nothing to any other large daily paper for a fixed period of time, which came to an end two years ago.

My two first articles, one ('La Vieille Fille'), exceeded by thrice as much again the length agreed on; the other ('La Femme Supérieure'), by five times. I have ten letters calling on me for 'La Maison Nucingen,' the last of the articles due, and pressing me to finish the corrections; and it has been for two months in proof under your own eyes. I left in January on a long journey, having given the order to go to press fifty days previously. I came back in July last, and my publishers gave me notice that 'La Presse' had refused to insert that which they had agreed to insert, and this without any notice to me.

I had a clear case at law with the stipulations

in writing that I possess; but the position of the manager of 'La Presse' was such in the eyes of the public that in bringing an action I should seem to have been joining with his enemies. Besides, even a successful lawsuit costs so much trouble, that I have the greatest repugnance to be harassed by one.

I therefore offered as a substitute 'La Torpille,' already accepted before 'La Maison Nucingen;' and to avoid all difficulty, I delivered the manuscript, and the manuscript having been read, that work was set up in type. It was again refused, like 'La Maison Nucingen.' Here any one's patience would have broken down. Wishing, however, to come to some sort of conclusion, I sent within the week of the refusal, the MS. of the 'Curé du Village,' the length of which was the same as the two previous works that had been rejected.

If there be any generosity in the matter, there is too much on my side for me to take advantage of it. The 'Curé du Village' would have appeared long ago, if 'La Presse' had shown the energy of M. Veron of the 'Constitutionnel.' He sent for the proofs to my house, and took some trouble to obtain what he desired.

I have had the proofs of 'Le Curé du Village'

by me for the last month: *they were sent to me one month after the delivery of the MS.* If 'La Presse' will send for them, they will be ready on Sunday, December 2.

Nothing of mine has appeared in 'Le Figaro.' 'La Presse' is the only paper that has ever troubled me with the stupid objections of people who cannot understand the intention of a work, and who treated what I was doing for their benefit as *idle talk.*

I am sorry, sir, you should see these things in a different light, but I am not surprised. What Madame O'Donnell proposed was a method of settling the matter which would have been much to my disadvantage; but as this is the second refusal in the same transaction, there is no other way of concluding the matter than by publishing, as soon as possible, 'La Curé du Village,' towards which I gladly do my share. Will you, therefore, let me know whether you will send the proofs to me free by post; and whether I shall return them in the same way, or whether you will place one of your messengers at my disposal.

Whatever may be my feelings towards yourself, you will never find anything in my conduct which is not conformable with the strictest justice,

and I may certainly add, with the greatest delicacy; for I shall never let you know all the sacrifices your rejection of the 'Maison Nucingen' has entailed upon me; but I, more than most men, respect the rights of friendship, even though that friendship has been broken.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

1839.

Tranquillise yourself, dearest Laura; in all probability during this week I shall be able to scrape together the nccessary two thousand francs. I shall then try to repay you all I owe; my poor mother will suffer for it, but with her, I know I can soon heal all wounds.

I will try not to borrow again from my good Surville; for if by chance he knew the anguish I have already endured, he would not be so strong to bear up against it, as I have been and still shall be.

I have to stand alone now amidst my troubles; formerly, I had beside me in my struggles the most courageous and sweetest person in the world; a woman whose memory is each day renewed in my heart, and whose divine qualities make all other friendships, when compared with

hers, seem pale. I no longer have help in the difficulties of life; when I am in doubt about any matter, I have now no other guide than this fatal thought, 'If she were alive, what would she say?' . . . Intellects of this order are rare. The intimacy which would otherwise have been so precious between you and me is made impossible by your duties as a wife and mother; by dint of seeing literature composed, you would have come to understand it, you would have acquired the faculty, and we should have gone on together to our lives' end, for literary aptitude can be acquired.

Amongst those whom I can trust for judgment, there is only Madame Zulma who has the high intelligence necessary to play such a part, never was so wonderful an intellect so entirely stifled, she will die in her corner—unknown! George Sand would soon be my friend, she has no littleness of mind, nor any of those low jealousies which obscure much contemporary talent (Dumas resembles her in this respect), but the critical faculty is in her entirely absent.

Madame Hanska is all this; but I cannot lean heavily upon her, in her position, nor would I, unless she could know beforehand all it would involve.

Let us leave these subjects, you know well

my brotherly tenderness is boundless, time only makes it more warm and living each day.

So, farewell, dear and most dear Laura.

To M. Louis Desnoyers, Paris.

1839.

My dear M. Desnoyers,—By a wonderful chance I have promised to join a dinner party of good young fellows, who are determined to laugh and drink. Now as I am become quite idiotic from work, I cannot resist this dissipation —I shall not, therefore, be at home. Come on Sunday morning early.—*Tout à vous.*

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Les Jardies: 1839.

My dear Laura,—Knowing how you torment yourself on my account, I may tell you that this week I hope to accomplish the long-talked-of reimbursement, and that I shall have wherewith to extinguish, within about ten thousand francs, all my most pressing miseries. Everything promises well. I will come and tell you two words about it on Friday or Saturday.

The 'Renaissance' capitulates, and will give me fifteen thousand francs in advance; I have

succeeded in bringing them to these terms. I have written during the past week fifty-five printed sheets; as much more will be needed. I have only had forty-five hours of sleep in the last ten days, but there is some risk in this.

I want to have, *as cheaply as possible*, some white fustian, to cover four mattresses, three feet and a half wide; some white ticking for a feather bed, which has to be re-made, and for two bolsters. Tell me, please, how much this will cost. The upholstresses have asked for it. Ah! I must have, besides, some blue binding.

A thousand affectionate things to all of you.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Les Jardies: March 1839.

Chère,—What you ask is at the present moment absolutely impossible; though in two or three months nothing may be more easy. To you, sister of my soul, I can confide my most private affairs. I am in the depths of a dreadful misery: the walls of the Jardies are falling down, all through the fault of the builder, who made no foundations; all the loss, although it is his fault, falls upon me, he being without a *sou*, and I have only given him eight thousand francs on account.

Do not think me imprudent, *cara*; at this moment I ought to be rich, I have done miracles of work, but all my intellectual work has crumbled along with my walls. I have broken down like a foundered horse; I shall indeed need to come to Frapesle to rest.

'La Renaissance' had promised me six thousand francs premium for a piece in five acts. Périmé was the medium of communication; all was arranged. As I wanted six thousand francs by the end of February, I set to work, I passed sixteen days and sixteen nights at work, only sleeping three hours out of the twenty-four; I employed twenty workmen at the printing office, and I was able to write and compose 'l'École des Ménages,' in five acts, and ready to read on February 25. My managers had no money, or rather Dumas, who had failed them, and with whom they were angry, came back to them; they would not listen to my play, and refused it. Thus, here I am, knocked up with work, sixteen days lost, six thousand francs to pay,—and nothing! This blow has upset me, I have not yet got over it.

My theatrical career will run the same chances as my literary career, my first work will be refused. It requires a more than superhuman courage to support these terrible whirlwinds of misfortune.

Nevertheless, the future is drawing nearer. My volumes, at three francs fifty centimes in 18mo., each containing one work, sell well enough, and it may be that in a few months all may change; you know my indomitable courage. But my physical strength is bending now beneath its rider, the brain.

You can well believe that if I have not been able to go and see you since your journey to Versailles, it is because I had work on hand that could not be put off. I could hardly even go and see the 'Diva.' I have no halting-place nor bivouac in my campaigns. At that time I was writing 'La Fille d'Eve Béatrix,' 'Le Grand Homme de Province'—in all, five volumes in octavo—and I published the 'Curé du Village.' Judge what my life was like.

I will not keep you waiting for the sum you ask me for; and I will send it you as soon as I get it, at the risk of putting off pressing creditors. Besides, I mean to make an effort to raise a loan. One must at last bend one's head beneath the Caudine Forks of money.

Adieu! dear, very dear friend! Though I do not write often, believe my friendship does not sleep; the farther we advance in life, precious ties, like our friendship, only grow the closer.

To Mr. Henry Beyle, Paris.

Ville d'Avray: March 20, 1839.

Sir,—I have just read an article in the 'Constitutionnel,' taken from the 'Chartreuse,' which has made me envious. Yes, I have been seized with a fit of jealousy while reading the superb and true description of a battle, such as I had dreamed of for the 'Scènes de la Vie Militaire,' the most difficult part of my work. This piece has charmed, grieved, enchanted, and driven me to despair. I say this without reserve, Borgognone, Wouvermanns, Salvator Rosa, or Walter Scott would have done it thus. Therefore, be not astonished if I jump at your offer, if I send for the book, you must trust to my honesty to tell you what I think. The fragment will make me exacting about the whole; with you, letters of exchange may be drawn on curiosity without fear.

I am such a childlike reader, so easily charmed, so ready to be pleased, that I can never give an opinion after I have just finished reading a work; I am the softest critic in the world, and I make no account of blunders which might be seen with half an eye; my coolness and judgment do not return till days afterwards.

A thousand kind compliments

To Madame de Balzac, Viarmes, Seine et Oise.

Monday: 1839.

I am much obliged by your offer, my dear mother, I would have come and embraced you, but I will not accept it, except in the last necessity. I earnestly wish you to repay all you owe, so that when I am able to make you an allowance, which will now be soon, you may enjoy in peace the little I so gladly give you.

I work so cruelly hard, I cannot leave my room. Otherwise, I was looking forward to your *fête*, to come and see you; but instead, I shall be obliged to put off my visit until the evening before my departure, and all depends upon my work.

To Madame de Balzac, Viarmes.

March or April, 1839.

My dear Mother,—I will not let my conscience have one reproach to make on your account; and I am only sorry I told you about Henry's position, and the obligations which result from it for me, as well as the deplorable circumstances in which I find myself. I cannot hope to have any money before May 1. But on the first of that month you

can come and see me, and you shall have regularly a hundred and fifty francs a month, commencing from that period. Whatever happens to me, that shall be at your disposal; it is, I know, only barely what you will need, but I owe it to you at the risk of everything. If you will let me know where you will be, I will send it to you. For I do not like to give you the trouble of coming.

Accept, dear mother, the expression of my filial respect.

To Mr. Henry Beyle, Paris.

Ville d'Avray: April 6, 1839.

Sir,—One must never put off giving pleasure to those who have given us pleasure. 'La Chartreuse' is a great and splendid book. I say this without flattery, without envy. I should be incapable of writing it.

To Madame de Balzac, Viarmes.

Wednesday, 1839.

My dearly beloved Mother,—It is only to-day that I receive your letter, for I cannot go to 'Les Jardies,' and I am wandering about like a dog without its master. It is equally impossible for me to go to Viarmes before next Monday. If

between now and then, you and Laure come to Paris, send me a line to Buisson.[1] For we must have a long and very serious conversation about your last letter, and it is impossible for me to answer it in writing. I have too many things to tell you, and I must see you and talk with you. If you had come on Friday to Les Jardies, I was there ready to receive you.

I embrace you with all the strength of a heart that suffers more than anyone ever suffered before. Every day I am overwhelmed with fresh and ever-increasing disasters. My affectionate love to Laura and her little ones. I went to see Surville yesterday; he had just left, and I wanted to speak to him. I have not had a moment's breathing time this week.

To Monsieur Merle, Paris.

Paris: 1839.

My dear Merle,—Can you tell me, if you cannot give it me, the number where you repeat Buloz's speech to the king? We can make a very serious affair of it.

Kind remembrances.

[1] A tailor, who lived in the Rue Richelieu 104, and in whose house Balzac had a temporary lodging.

To Monsieur Louis Desnoyers, Paris.

Paris: April 20, 1839.

My dear Desnoyers,—I am under legal obligation to remove from Chaillot,[1] where I have a library of four thousand valuable books, and the fancy furniture about which there has been so much talk. I have been thus occupied for the last two days, and I shall be kept busy two days more.

Give less of 'Béatrix,' and try to contrive for me two or three days' rest. By that means I shall be able to get through it all. I am worn out; during the day I live the life of a porter. I am obliged to go myself to arrange all my things at Ville d'Avray, and at night I am overwhelmed by proofs from Souverain of the 'Grand Homme de Province à Paris.' I have some corrections and some additions to make to the chapter of 'Claude Vignon.' Do not give it without the fresh copy. The author and the paper have been courageous; we shall make our harvest in the third and fourth parts.

A thousand remembrances.

[1] Rue des Batailles, No. 12.

To M. Louis Desnoyers, Paris.

1839.

My dear Desnoyers,—As to faults in French, which everybody makes, and myself more especially—for the more one writes the more opportunities one has—there can be no doubt about the necessity of your correcting them. It is the task of the overseer, but I do not wish to liken your august functions to those of overseers. Here begin our obligations to an editor, unless one has become idiotic from self-love. I did not reach home yesterday until eleven o'clock, on account of the very important business which compelled me to go out at the hour when I go to bed. I was not able to go to the printing office, so the errors remained untouched. But much shall be forgiven to him who has sinned much!

If you wish to have a written permission to correct the grammatical errors, I give it you all the more willingly that it will be a great help to me who can never succeed in correcting them without a succession of proofs; and even then find some that have been overlooked.

Many kind compliments.

To Monsieur Hippolyte Souverain, Paris.

Les Jardies: June 11, 1839.

Monsieur Souverain,—There are horrible mistakes in 'Béatrix;' it is the last time that I will ever allow anyone but myself to read my proofs. You care as much about a book as a grocer about his plums. It is very bad of you booksellers!

If by chance you come to see me, will you be kind enough to bring me from your neighbour[1] a copy of Byron, two copies of the 'Peau de Chagrin,' which he ought to send me; and ask him also for a 'Père Goriot.'

To Monsieur Victor Hugo,[2] Paris.

Paris: July 19, 1839.

Monsieur and dear colleague,—We have the honour to inform you that at the meeting of to-day the Committee[3] has nominated you, as well as Monsieur Gozlan and myself, to decide upon a very serious point relative to literature and to our Society. Will you do me the honour of

[1] The editor, Edmond Werdet.
[2] *Illusions Perdues* is dedicated to him.
[3] The Committee of the Société des Gens de Lettres.

coming to luncheon at Les Jardies, at Sèvres? We can then develop at our ease a project which is really vast. Monsieur Gozlan has accepted my invitation.

If you do not answer, I shall expect you. But if you are not able to come, will you send word by M. Gozlan?

Allow me to offer you the sincere expression of my admiration.

To arrive at Les Jardies, you take the Sèvres omnibus at the Place du Carrousel; and you stop at the Arcade de Ville d'Avray. Les Jardies is on the Ville d'Avray road, after the arcade of the railway.

To M. le Procureur du Roi, at his office of Public Prosecutor.

Paris: September 1, 1839.

Sir,—I am aware that the Committee of the 'Société des Gens de Lettres' must have officially denounced to you an act of serious defamation committed against me; transmitting at the same time the print complained of.[1] But as

[1] This refers to a lithograph, published by the *Gazette des Écoles*, which represented Balzac in a cell at Clichy, dressed like a monk, and sitting at a table on which were seen bottles of wine and a

this would scarcely be a sufficient notification, I have the honour, Monsieur le Procureur du Roi, hereby to make myself the plaintiff in the civil action before you. Monsieur Benazet, attorney to the Société, will be instructed, and will take the necessary proceedings.

Accept, Monsieur le Procureur du Roi, the expression of my most profound respect.

To the Editor of the Journal ——

Les Jardies: 1840.

Sir,—As I am ignorant of the name of the critic to whom I owe the article which has been written on my book in your paper, will you have the kindness to express my gratitude to him? He has so well explained the fundamental idea of the book, which has been so disdainfully treated by those who have already spoken of it, that I owe him my sincere and hearty thanks.

champagne glass; in his left hand a pipe which he was smoking and with his right hand he encircled the waist of a young woman. At the bottom of the lithograph was written, '*The Reverend Father Dom Seraphim Mysticus Goriot* of the regular order of the friars of Clichy, committed there at the suit of those whom he had been the cause of sending there, receives in his enforced solitude the consolations of *Santa Seraphita* (*Scènes de la Vie cachée*, a sequel to *Les Scènes de la Vie privée*).'

Eventually, sir, this idea, which is really designed to present an abstract formula of human life without touching upon any specific individuality, will come out more distinctly when in the second edition I shall explain the plan of this undertaking, beginning by a group of individual types of human existence of the poorest and lowest, and rising, by shades of difference, up to the king, up to the priest, by following the influence of *thought* upon *life*. Then, after taking a general view of social humanity, idealising it, if I can, I shall endeavour to grasp—*empoigner*, if I may be permitted the word—the governments themselves, and with the last rallying cry which remains in modern literature, denounce (if I can), their persistent imbecility; showing that it only needs to make a hierarchy of capacity and to put despotism into the social form and not vest it in individuals.

As you have encouraged me indirectly by a rare comprehension of my work, permit me to express my gratitude by showing you the difficulty of the task for which you have given me renewed courage.

Critics who work in good faith are so rare in these times of envy and hatred in which we are living, that it would be the duty of a writer to

sympathise with the generous souls by whom he is understood, even if it were not also a pleasure.

Accept the expression of my high consideration and my sincere compliments.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

Paris: March 2, 1840.

My old friend,—If you have, amongst your acquaintances, persons who want to assist at the first representation of 'Vautrin,' and who are good-natured, I have the right to let boxes to my friends rather than to strangers. I am particularly anxious there should be pretty women. In such a case, let me know, as soon as you can, names, so that I may inscribe them. I will send you a stall; there are already more demands for boxes than can be supplied, and we are obliged to sacrifice the press.

A thousand remembrances.

To M. de Lamartine, Paris.

Paris: March 13, 1840.

Sir,—I can well believe that with you the man of politics so completely absorbs the literary

man that you do not know what is taking place in a little theatre on the Boulevards.

I have, then, the honour to inform you that to-morrow a piece of mine, a drama in five acts, will be played at the Porte St.-Martin.

If, as I hope, I fall early, I shall hasten to seek from your friendship the consolation necessary under the circumstances.

To M. Léon Gozlan, Homme de Lettres, Paris.

Paris: March 1840.

My dear Gozlan,—I have sent you a balcony stall. Dutacq's speech frightens me, for I have been obliged to recall the one I sent to him. These rehearsals are killing me.

You will see a remarkable failure. I think I have done wrong to ask the public to assist at it. *Morituri te salutant, Cæsar!*

You ought to have signed a sheet, and the stall sent is No. 12.

To Madame de V——, (on sending her the corrected proofs of 'Béatrix').

Paris: 1840.

My dear friend,—Here are the proofs of 'Béatrix': a book for which you have made me

feel an affection, such as I have not felt for any other book. It has been the ring which has united our friendship.

I never give these things except to those I love, for they bear witness to my long labours, and to that patience of which I spoke to you. My nights have been passed over these terrible pages, and amongst all to whom I have presented them, I know no heart more pure and noble than yours, in spite of those little attacks of want of faith in me, which no doubt arise from your great wish to find a poor author more perfect than he can be.

This morning, dear friend, I had just finished writing to you, when the 'Directeur des Beaux Arts' called on me a second time. . . . . He offered me provisionally an indemnity (which did not come up to the sum which is owing to you).[1] . . . . I refused it. I told him that either I was in the right or I was not; and that if I were in the right, I had contracted obligations towards third parties which at least ought to be fulfilled. I said that never had I asked a favour, and that I was determined to hold fast to my integrity. I would

[1] This indemnity was offered to Balzac, in the name of the State, to cover the loss suffered by the prohibition of the representations of *Vautrin*.

either have all that was due to other people, or I would accept nothing for myself alone.

He left me saying he much admired my sentiments, and referred me for a more ample compensation to the result of the Parliamentary struggle.

I tell you this, because these matters concern you. However, notwithstanding this check and my own illness, my courage is not abated. I can draw water from other wells, from those of the publishers, to fulfil my engagements. I send you a thousand friendly feelings. I am somewhat fatigued this evening. *Adieu, chère.*

To M. Dugarier; Manager of the Journal 'La Presse,' *Paris.*

Aux Jardies: Sèvres, May 23, 1840.

For some time past I have had the copy ready for 'Les Paysans,' which will supply *le feuilleton* of 'La Presse' for nearly a month; a fortnight's work would make it ready to appear, but I must know where to go for a printer. The workman who had it in hand has disappeared.

Messieurs Béthune and Plon always make a complete mess of corrections, and my work must be set up in some passages in old type. These difficulties cannot be removed by correspondence.

If you will come and see me in the country, we can come to an understanding. 'Les Paysans' might appear in July between the 1st and the 10th.

Accept my compliments.

I want to examine my account, in order to see if there has not been some confusion between two agreements; this without any imputation of inaccuracy.

To Monsieur Hippolyte Souverain, Paris.

Les Jardies: Monday morning, 1840.

I have sent three times already, my dear Monsieur Souverain, to the Gondoles,[1] and there is no parcel for me. I cannot say any more to you about it. Our relations as regards the execution of our agreement have become impossible on my side and were only a decoy on yours. You wished to make me fail, and I can quite understand that you will not come and see me until June 16. You print 'Pierrette' without allowing me to verify the proofs, and there will be dreadful mistakes; you seem to consider the intervention of the author in the printing of his book either useless or obnoxious.

[1] Diligences which plied at that time between Paris and Versailles.

I have not received the first volume of my 'Curé' complete, and if it is printed I ought to have it.

My copy is ready. But you know quite well I never trust it to a third person.

I perceive that you systematically throw obstacles in the way of everything. It is enough to disgust one with work. You are aware that it is often an impossibility for me to go and come, and there has not been on your side the least wish to oblige. It would have obliged me to go to the printing office. With such a system, one would not write two books in two years.

I waited for you the day before yesterday, and yesterday all day, and to wait expecting someone to come is to do nothing. You do not know what annoyances, losses, and trouble all this causes me for the present and for the future.

You do not wish the 'Curé' to appear. It might have been finished on May 15, and on May 15 there were not six sheets in print from the copy.[1]

To Monsieur Armand Dutacq, Paris.

Paris: July 17, 1840.

My dear Dutacq,—To-day, Friday, July 17, at twelve o'clock, after having sent in eight days ago

[1] *A la Revue Parisienne.*

the letter on Literature, and four days ago the letter on Politics, I have not the proofs! It is impossible for me to go on like this. You must not count upon me, if you have not the means to carry out my work. I am incapable of remaining three days waiting. My ideas vanish, and the power of working also. If this goes on, I tell you decidedly I give it up; I should exhaust myself in sterile waiting. It is not with work of this kind as it is with an artist, who whilst waiting for a model can make a sketch. To have my proofs eight days after is to oblige me to do another work as considerable as the first.

It is not right that thought should be made subservient to the instruments. It is for instruments to serve thoughts. To go on thus is to be worn out for a pure loss. This is the way in which publishers make us fail in our work, and then they complain that we are behindhand.

Your printer is making game both of you and of me, my good fellow.

To Monsieur Auguste Borget, at M. Carraud's, Frapesle.

Aux Jardies: August 13, 1840.

My good old and sure friend,—At every hour, at every moment, you have the *entrée* and a room

in my house. I have often thought of you, as Madame Carraud will tell you. As to my situation, it is worse than ever. My friendship for you, my debts, my work, all have augmented.

At this moment there is a copy of 'Vautrin' at Frapesle, and a word to the dear and well-beloved *châtelaine.*

I cannot write a long letter, my dear Borget. The most touching tale I have written, 'La Messe de l'Athée,' is dedicated to you. It will tell you everything.

Come, dear friend, you will be received as if it were the day before you left.

Whilst you were working and running about the world, I got on with the work of which you know the place, the extent, and innumerable details; no friends, many enemies. So much for what concerns me.

I am glad to know you are back in France, well, and persevering in your career. But I should have been more content still if you had brought back the wherewithal to make you independent. I am a sad example of those who count on art as a means of existence.

Here where I am—I am in Paris—and much less cut off from the centre than I was at Chaillot and in Rue Cassini.

Good-bye, dear, very dear friend! I have no more than time to send you a good shake-hand and a brotherly *accolade*. You know that I have sustained a cruel bereavement, and that it has saddened my life. One holds the more to the friendships which remain, and which are of ancient date, and the more the years roll on, the more one clings to them. Say all this to Madame Zulma, to whom I send a thousand affectionate messages. My remembrances to the Commandant. Embrace Yorick for me; and believe in the warmest feelings of my heart.

To Mr. Charles de Bernard, Paris.

Paris: Thursday morning, 1840.

My dear De Bernard,—I leave for Les Jardies, where I shall remain till next Wednesday. If you would like to come some morning and see the little nest I told you about, come. And take the answer about the two works, 'Mitouflet ou l'Élection en province' and 'Qui a terre a guerre.' There is a good reason why there must be a decision before next Thursday; there are people after it, as tradesmen say.

A thousand kind and friendly things. Come

with the Fosseuse,[1] and help me to arrange my books. You shall have fifty sous a day and your wine.

To Madame Debordes-Valmore,[2] *Paris.*

1840.

Dear Nightingale,—Two little letters had arrived, too brief by two whole pages, but perfumed with poetry, breathing the heaven whence they come, and, like some fine passages of a symphony of Beethoven, they recall the two days I passed with you, so that (a thing which rarely happens with me), I remained in a reverie with the letters in my hand, making a poem all alone to myself, saying, 'She has then retained a recollection of the heart in which she awoke an echo, she and all her poetry of every kind.' We are natives of the same country, madame, the country of tears and poverty. We are as much neighbours and fellow-citizens as prose and poetry can be in France; but I draw near to you by the feeling with which I admire you, and which made me stand for an hour of ten minutes before your picture in the Salon.

Adieu! My letter will not tell you all my thoughts; but find in it by intuition all the friend-

[1] A friendly *sobriquet* given by Balzac to Madame Charles de Bernard. *Fosseuse* is a person in the *Médecin de Campagne.*

[2] *Jésus-Christ en Flandre* is dedicated to her.

ship which I have entrusted to it, and all the treasures which I would send you if I had them at my disposal.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Les Jardies: September 23, 1840.

I am not able to go and see you, dear sister; fatigue chains me here. I am obliged to stop my night work. I go to bed early and sleep. I go nowhere. I have broken with M. de Girardin. I have already broken with that corner of the world.

My third number of the 'Revue Parisienne' will appear in two days.

Do not torment yourself; I will arrange the payment you mention. Why is my mother sad? I have still much to suffer, it is true; but in the battle one must march on without giving way to emotion.

A bientôt, in spite of all! You know if the Faubourg Poissonnière attracts me.

Besides, come to Ville d'Avray, if you pine after your brother.

To Monsieur Louis Desnoyers, Paris.

Sèvres: Friday evening, 1840.

My dear Desnoyers,—Without any regard to my quality as member of the Société des Gens de

Lettres, they have thrown me into an ignoble prison at Sèvres for not having been amongst the the vines to see if some runaways from Paris were not eating the grapes. Serious crime towards the rural National Guard instituted to protect the vintage! And here I am for seventy-two hours.

It is impossible for me to go to the assembly,[1] and I explain the case to you, that they may understand that there is nothing amiss, except the difficulty of getting out. It is absolutely as severe and worse than if I had stolen some millions from shareholders.

A thousand compliments.

To M. Charles de Bernard, Paris.

Aux Jardies: 1840.

My dear De Bernard,—Italians, Poles, people from the provinces—all the world, in fact—have found that which the wittiest of men has sought for in vain. If you have been to Ville d'Avray, you must have passed in front of my cottage; it is on the road, and is seen from all points. I am not in the middle of a wood; I am in the parish of Sèvres, and not at Ville d'Avray. Unfortunately for me, the two thousand travellers by

[1] The meeting of the Committee of the Society of Gens de Lettres.

railway see me every day as they come and go from Paris to Versailles. Indeed, I am in the Park of St. Cloud like the lantern of Demosthenes (which all the world insists on calling *Diogenes*). I am convinced now, if I had doubted it before, that you are a clever man, for it is only dreamers given up to literature who do not discover the common objects by the roadside.

I had not counted on myself for attracting you here, but on the charms of admirable country scenery; and I am sure that sooner or later you and your wife would like to become acquainted with the woods of Saint-Cucufa and others. As to me, I only come to Paris for a few moments—for some troublesome business—so that I have little chance of meeting you. Mille compliments.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Les Jardies: 1840.

You think me happy! God knows! Sorrow has come, a deep and clinging sorrow, and which cannot be spoken.

As to material affairs, sixteen volumes written, and twenty acts finished this year have not sufficed. One hundred and fifty thousand francs earned have not given me peace!

I have remitted fifteen hundred francs out of the two thousand due to Auguste; but the five hundred francs must go for nothing. As he must have interest, I consider that still I owe him a thousand francs; but the utmost I can do will be to give them to him this winter, as soon as I shall have had some success in theatrical matters. You need not fear that 'Les Jardies' will make me forget Frapesle.

Ever yours.

To Madame Laure Surville, Viarmes.

Aux Jardies: November 1840.

My dear Laure,—You can well imagine I have little time for writing when I am obliged to work for my money three months in advance; and changing my domicile costs me as much running about as expense. My mother's room will be ready in ten days, and all finished by the fifth of December.

I met your sister-in-law yesterday, who told me Surville complained he did not see me. I said I could not imagine how he, a mathematician, did not spread the pages of octavo over the days and add up the sum. I have no money to spend in carriage expenses; one must take such long journeys for the slightest things. I always take

them from my sleep. I have more than three hundred columns of newspaper to write:

'Les Lecamus'	120	columns.
'Une Ténébreuse Affaire' (dans le 'Journal du Commerce'	120	„
Un article à 'La Mode'	64	„
Un article à 'La Sylphide' . . .	14	„
'Les Deux Frères' à 'La Presse' . .	60	„
Total	378	„

And all this must be done in a month's time. I have, besides, Souverain to worry me for the 'Curé du Village' and 'Sœur Marie des Anges,' four volumes in octavo, which overwhelm me with proofs.

Now, my dear children, this little bulletin will prove to you that you must leave me to myself, and not say one word to one who has such a burden to bear. Tell your husband it is as if he built seven bridges at once. The four volumes do not bring me in a halfpenny, nor yet do 'Les Lecamus' nor the 'Presse.' I must find Surville the money he paid for me, and before that I must extinguish another debt. The universe will be terrified at my works before my relations or my friends will believe in their existence.

As no one can come and see me and I cannot go to anyone, I must submit and suffer. Impress

on my mother to send her feather-bed, her clock, her candlesticks, two pairs of sheets, her linen, to you; I will have them all fetched on December 3 or 4. If she likes, she can be very happy, but tell her that she must encourage happiness and not frighten it away. She will have near her a confidential attendant and a servant, and she will be taken care of in the way she likes. Her room is as elegant as I can make it. She has the Persian carpet which I had in my room in the Rue Cassini. Make her promise not to object to what I wish her to do as regards her dress; I do not wish her to be dressed otherwise than as she *ought to be*, it would give me great pain. She does not know either Switzerland or the Alps, and if I go and study on the spot the 'Scènes de la Vie Militaire' (and it is probable I shall go and see the Alps and Genoa), I count on taking her with me, unless it would be too fatiguing, or that I should not have money enough; for in travelling in foreign parts, it would be impossible for me not to treat her with all the honour due to *Madame mère*.

Farewell. You return to Paris. I shall not see you often, but I shall receive news of you from my mother, who will go sometimes to you.

You could not get through the manuscript of

'Lecamus.' We must besides be beforehand with those who would do it from the *feuilleton*, and I keep it back to see whether Laurent, you, and I can turn it into a play. I embrace you all, my dear nieces, my sister, my mother, and give my kind regards to Surville. By the by, I am attacking to the death his Polytechnic School, and I will come and show him the proof as well as to yourself; it is capital. Thus I shall see you about the second of December, when you will be settled again.

A thousand affectionate things.

To Monsieur Charles de Bernard, Paris.

1840.

I have seen with my eyes the holy copy. Go on, my child, and courage! Clementine [1] has made me quite dissipated. I came, I dined with her. But without you. Hang yourself, brave Bernard, for we waited until seven o'clock.

A thousand remembrances. May we meet again soon! I am ashamed to say, I am nearly asleep. And it is the effect of the 'Petites Misères de la Vie conjugale,' that I have to write to-night.

[1] Madame Charles de Bernard.

To Monsieur Jules Hetzel, Publisher, Paris.

1841.

My dear Hetzel,—All that you do for this article of the 'Lion,'[1] will be well done. I have the greatest confidence in Monsieur Stahl, and you need not have written me four pages of rhetorical advice. Only send me the proofs when all is settled, that I may add the last touches, so that Monsieur Stahl may not take more trouble than necessary.

Yours always.

To Monsieur Victor Hugo, Paris.

June 1, 1841.

My dear Hugo,—If you have put on one side the two tickets I asked you for, and which I have been twice to fetch without being able to find you, have the kindness to give them in an envelope to the bearer, or send them to me by post, Rue des Martyrs, 47. If not, may the devil take the Academy and its green coats!

My adoration and regards.

[1] 'Voyage d'un Lion d'Afrique à Paris (Scènes de la Vie privée et publique des Animaux).'

To Madame de Balzac, Paris.

April 1842.

My dear Mother,—It is very difficult for me to enter into the engagement you ask of me, and to do so without reflection would entail consequences most serious both for you and for myself.

The money necessary for my existence is, as it were, wrung from what should go to pay my debts, and hard work it is to get it.

The sort of life I lead is suitable for no one; it wears out relations and friends; all fly from my dreary house. My affairs will become more and more difficult to manage, not to say impossible.

The failure of my play, as regards money, still further complicates my situation.

I find it impossible to work in the midst of all the little storms raised up in a household where the members do not live in harmony.

My work has become much more feeble during the last year, as anyone may see.

I am in doubt what to do. But I must come to some determination within a few days.

When my furniture has been sold, and when I have disposed of 'Les Jardies,' I shall not have much left. And I shall find myself alone in the world with nothing but my pen, and an attic.

In such a situation shall I be able to do more for you than I am doing at this moment. I shall have to live from hand to mouth by writing articles which I can no longer write with the agility of youth which is mine no more.

The world, and even my relations, mistake me, I am engrossed by my work, and they think I am absorbed in myself.

I am not blind to the fact, that up to the present moment, working as I work, I have not succeeded in paying my debts, nor in supporting myself. No future work will save me. I must do something else, look out for some other position.

And it is at a time like this that you ask me to enter into such an engagement! Two years ago I should have done so, and have deceived myself.

Now all I can say is, come to me and share my crust.

You were in a tolerable position; I had a domestic whose devotion spared you all the worry of housekeeping; you were not called on to enter into every detail, you were quiet and peaceful. You wished me to count for something in your life, when it was imperative to forget my existence, and to allow me entire liberty, with-

out which I can do nothing. It is not a fault in you, it is in the nature of women.

Now everything is changed. If you wish to come back, you will have to bear a little of the burden which is about to weigh me down, and which hitherto has only pressed upon you because you chose to take it on yourself.

All this is business, and in no way involves my affection for you, which is always the same; so believe in the tenderness of your devoted Son.

To M. David, Sculptor, Paris.

1842.

Sir,—I am naturally much flattered by your proposal.

But if no lithograph, nor portrait of me of any kind exists, it is because I am bound by a promise on this point.

This promise is, moreover, in harmony with my own taste.

We never know if our small glorifications are anything more than a mere fashion of the moment, and there is nothing more frightful than to see one's self the ghost of one's own glory.

Later on, if I ever become worthy of it, and if the prohibition is removed, I shall be at your service.

If I give you this explanation, it is to convince you there is neither affectation nor want of courtesy in my refusal.

Accept my thanks for your gracious offer, and the expression of my sincere admiration which I would gladly express in a less common-place form, but you are too much accustomed to this. I will only offer you my sympathy with your genius.

To Madame Hanska, St. Petersburg.[1]

Berlin: October 14, 1843.

Dear Countess,—I arrived here this morning at six o'clock, having had no rest beyond twelve hours at Tilsit.

I came too late to dine with Stieglitz, as I had wished.

So long as I was on Russian ground I seemed still with you, and I could still write cheerfully of my regrets. But once in a foreign land, I can tell you nothing more, except that this journey should be made when going to you, not when

[1] There is a long interval in the series of letters to Madame Hanska; there are none since the year 1838. A great number of Balzac's letters to her were lost in a fire which occurred in the house of Madame Hanska, at Moscow. Apparently he had left his troubles in Paris, and gone to spend two months with her in St. Petersburg. She was then a widow, with an only child—'the Countess Anna'—who is mentioned constantly in subsequent letters.

leaving you. The aspect of Russian soil, without culture, without inhabitants, seemed natural; but it is a horrible sadness to see the same spectacle in Prussia. These starved-looking estates, this sterile soil, this cold desolation, this poverty, has all seized on my imagination and frozen me. . . .

I have made the three visits: Bresson, Redern, Mendelssohn; on my return I sat down to write to you, for talking to you was the strongest and most vital instinct of the moment; but I was interrupted by the Count de Bresson, who came to ask me to dinner to-morrow.

I am staying at the Hôtel de Russie, which is comfortable, and not too dear. From Berlin I shall go to Leipsic, and then to Frankfort-on-the-Maine by post-chaise, and home to France by steam-boat. I have found two sculptors, travelling companions, one of whom speaks French somewhat incomprehensibly, and I have just been with him to see the town. These two young people have been very good and full of attention to me, all the way from Riga, where I parted from my first travelling companion, the Frenchman. Artist nature is everywhere the same. These two young people have saved me all trouble at inns along the road; and I have now just invited them to dine with me, (*un dîner*

de rapins, be it understood). It is the least I can do to invite these obliging lads, to thank them for their kindness before we part.

Sulky Berlin is not to be compared to sumptuous St. Petersburg. In the first place twenty mean little towns like the capital of Brandenburg could be carved out of the great city of the largest of European empires, and still there would remain buildings enough to crush the twenty little Berlins cut out of it without making much difference in its vast expanse. At first sight, Berlin appears more populous, for I have perceived several people in the streets, which one does not often see in St. Petersburg.

The monuments, ugly enough in aspect, are of fine cut stone; the open spaces are arranged so as to give them their full effect, and it is to this charlatanism that Berlin may, perhaps, owe its more populous, or I should have said, more animated aspect if I had been speaking of any other nation; but the Prussian, with his brutal heaviness, will never do anything but crush. There would need to be less beer, better tobacco, and more French and Italian *esprit* before the movement and activity of the large capitals of Europe can arise here; or there must be those industrial and commercial ideas which have caused

the gigantic development of London. But Berlin and its inhabitants will never be anything more than a villanous little town, inhabited by a villanous big people. However, it must be owned that, to anyone coming fresh from Russia, there is in Germany an indescribable air, not yet to be expressed by the magic word *liberty*, but which may be translated by *free manners*, or rather *liberty in manners.*

October 16.

I have just been dining with Madame Bresson, *née* de Guitant; it happened to be a great dinner at the Affaires Étrangères, on the King's birth-day. With the exception of the Ambassadress, all were either old and ugly, or young and frightful; the handsomest, if not the youngest, woman was the one I took in to dinner: guess whom? The Duchesse de Talleyrand (ex-Dino), here with her son the Duc de Valençay, who looks ten years older than his mother. The conversation ran on persons, on the little incidents which had occurred in the last forty-eight hours; I can now understand Hoffmann's jokes about German courts. It was impossible to get near Redern. I had his wife beside me; she has the face of an heiress, and she must have been a very rich one to make up for

such a famine of attractions. After all, nothing in the world can be more tiresome than Berlin; I am devoured by *ennui, ennui* has entered into my bones. I am afraid it will make me ill. I am writing this before going to bed, and it is just nine o'clock! But what else can one do in Berlin?

To be sure there is one dissipation: 'Medea' translated literally from the Greek into German, and played literally. Yesterday they endeavoured to play—also literally—Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' so you see the King of Prussia encourages letters, but especially dead letters.

16th, Evening.

M. de Humboldt came to see me this morning for an hour, commissioned, as he told me, to deliver the compliments of the King and of the Princess of Prussia. He gave me the necessary directions to find Tieck at Potsdam. I intend to go and see Tieck, and I shall go by rail. On entering the compartment, I found my fantastic Duchesse de Talleyrand, with her hair becomingly dressed, a mass of flowers and diamonds; she looked like the apparition of a 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' She was going to Court, and was travelling in full dress. I begged this shepherdess of sixty to be good enough to lay my

respects at the feet of the Princess of Prussia. We had a third, the Count Redern, an old Prussian, *bellâtre*: dry as a Genevese, and as pompous as a shelved diplomatist. . . . . .

Well! I have seen Tieck in the bosom of his family. He seemed pleased with my homage. He had with him an old Countess, his contemporary, in spectacles, almost an octogenarian, a live mummy kept to be looked at, who seemed a kind of domestic divinity. I returned at half-past six in the evening, having eaten nothing since the morning. Berlin is the town of weariness; I should die of it in a week. Poor Humboldt is dying of it; he carries his Parisian home-sickness everywhere. As I leave to-morrow by rail, I must say adieu.

17th, Morning.

To-day I seem to quit you once more, for it is a fresh separation not to be able to write down each evening what has happened in the day. I am going to Leipsic; the day following I shall see Dresden; and on the 20th I return here to take my place in the Prussian diligence. This isolation, which replaces friendship, takes the semblance of remorse; I feel a violent wish for change of place, a wish to move about, to go and

come, as if by means of these physical movements I should end by finding you. I look with tenderness at this sheet of paper, thinking that your beautiful fingers will hold it, in that *salon* where the hours passed so sweetly and so rapidly. I shall receive another letter from Mayence. Adieu! If there is anything in this letter that displeases you, be good to me, as you always are, and forgive me. If you think of my regret, my sorrow and sadness, you will be filled with pity and indulgence for the poor exile.

To Madame Hanska, St. Petersburg.

Dresden: October 19, 1843.

I started from Berlin with *ennui, chère*, and here I find home-sickness.

Yesterday, having missed the time for the Gallery, I went over Dresden. It is, I assure you, a charming town, far preferable, as an abiding-place, to mean and dull Berlin.

Dear Countess, you can form no idea of my frightful isolation. Not speaking the language, and not finding anyone to talk to me, I have not spoken a hundred phrases since leaving Riga, where I left the French merchant. I am always in the presence of myself; and the country always

being the same everlasting desert and plain, there is nothing to interest the eye; whilst one's heart has passed from exceeding riches to the most absolute poverty. A fortnight more of this, and I should die out quietly without any apparent cause. German railways are nothing but pretexts for eating and drinking, they stop every moment, and the passengers get out to eat and drink; they get in again to recommence the process, in fact. The French post travels as fast as this steam.

October 21.

I leave here to-morrow; my place is taken. I finish this letter, as I must post it myself; my head feels like an empty pumpkin, and I am in a state that makes me feel more anxious than I can tell you. If I am like this in Paris, I shall be obliged to return to you. I have no sense of anything, I care for nothing, I have not the least energy or will. You will never know till I can tell you myself all the courage I am exerting to write this letter. This morning I lay in bed till eleven o'clock, from the mere inability to rise. I am thoroughly stupid, and the further I go, the more the malady increases. I can only describe it by what Fontenelle, when he was a hundred years old, expressed as, *une difficulté d'être.* Adieu!

dear blessed star; a day, a moment may perhaps come when I may tell you all the thoughts that oppress me, but now I can only say that I love you too much for my repose. After such an August and September, I cannot exist except near you, and your absence is my death.

There are moments when I see again perfectly all the little objects surrounding you; I see the cushion, bordered with the design like black lace, on which you lean. I can count its points! I never had so fresh a memory; my interior sight, on which are pictured the houses I build, the landscapes I create, all is occupied by these memories of the most happy part of my life. You cannot imagine the treasures of reverie which at times embellish certain hours. With my inward eyes, I see again the bronze angles ornamented with flowers, where I caught my knee whilst walking up and down your blue drawing-room, and the little easy chair in which you nursed your dreamy thoughts. What a power of happiness is contained in these returns of memory to a past, which is thus recalled to life afresh! These moments are more than life, for a whole lifetime has been compressed into this hour, snatched from the actual present by the memories which well up in my soul and flow over it in torrents. What

sweetness and strength there is in the simple recollection of certain outward things, to which I scarcely paid any attention in those happy days of the past, and how happy I am to be able to feel thus! Adieu! I am going to the post with this letter.

To Madame David (d'Angers), Paris.

1843.

Madame,—I rise from my bed, which I have not quitted since I last had the honour of paying my homage to you. I come now to bring your pound of Russian tea, which has no other merit than the exceeding difficulties it has encountered in passing through twenty custom-houses; and I am vexed to know that the tradesman's cover, which still envelopes it, has not been respected. The exquisite quality is a consolation.

My friendly regards to David, and to yourself the most graceful and respectful of compliments.

To M. le Contre-Amiral Bazoche, Governor of the Isle of Bourbon.

Paris: October 31, 1843.

M. le Contre-Amiral,—Accept the heartfelt thanks of myself and the whole of our family, for

the interest you have taken in my brother, and for the great kindness you have shown him. I have already publicly expressed my gratitude by dedicating to you 'L'Interdiction' in 'Les Scènes de la Vie Parisienne,' and I am glad of this opportunity to tell you again my sense of your goodness.

M. Coster, our mutual friend, will forward to you by a Government vessel, in March next, those volumes of my collected works which are published, and which I set aside for you, only waiting until there should be enough to make it worth while to send them so far.

M. le Gouverneur, you must have seen for yourself how greatly my brother has been changed by misfortune. He seems to me likely to profit by the severe lessons of experience, and from which none of our family have been exempt. I now write to entreat you to help us all by continuing your kindness towards my brother, and to make it effectual in this way:

Have the goodness to recommend him, as you have the full right to do, *for a clerkship in the Navy of the second class.* Do not disturb yourself as to the result of your official proposal; his friends here will have his nomination ready by the time your recommendation comes to hand,

and we shall only leave him in this post, provided always that he behaves well, long enough to qualify him for promotion to a first-class clerkship. MM. Coster, Fleurian, and Gerbidon, are writing to you, begging you to give this recommendation.

In the letter for my brother, which I enclose, he is empowered to draw on us, in the name of M. Surville, for twelve hundred francs, which will be lodged in readiness. We are obliged to take this way of doing it on account of the uncertainty of communication. Will you, M. le Gouverneur, have the goodness to assist him in getting this order discounted by some trustworthy person, who may be on the point of coming to France? This sum is intended to support him, in the interim of his appointment of receiving any portion of his salary.

Will you add to all your other favours that of advising M. Coster when you send off your official recommendation, which I entreat you not to delay, for you know well that in France Ministers 'se suivent et ne se ressemblent pas.'

Accept, M. l'Amiral, the gratitude of all our family and my own especially, and accept this letter as the expression of my profound esteem and regard.

To Madame Hanska, St. Petersburg.

Passy: Feb. 5, 1844.

I implore you not to vex yourself about the 'Revues,' there would be some cause for being annoyed, if it were otherwise. In France, a man is ruined the moment he makes a name for himself, and is crowned during his lifetime. Abuse, calumny, depreciation, all go for nothing with me. Some day it will be known and acknowledged, that if I have lived by my pen, two centimes never entered my purse that had not been hardly and laboriously earned; that praise or blame have been equally indifferent to me; that I built up my work in the midst of cries of hatred, and the sharp fires of literary musketry, and that I continued my course through all to the end firmly and imperturbably.

My revenge is, to write 'Les Petits Bourgeois' in the 'Débats.' It is thus that I make my enemies say with rage, 'At the moment when people thought he had written himself out, he publishes a master-piece!' This was the *mot* of Madame Reybaud, on reading 'Honorine,' 'David Séchard,' &c.

You shall read the strange drama of 'Esther.' I will send it, carefully corrected, and you will

see therein a Parisian world, which is, and always must be, utterly unknown to you, very different to the false Paris of the 'Mystères;' and it is often comic, and in it the author, as George Sand says, 'tears off, by a lash of the whip, all the coverings wrapped over wounds he lays bare. You write to me, 'What a grand volume is that which contains "La Maison Nucingen," "Pierre Grassou," "Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan"!' Perhaps you are right (between ourselves), I am proud of it. You will see that the corruptness of the Spanish Abbé was necessary to lead to the doings of Lucien in Paris, finishing up by a terrible suicide. Lucien has served as a type to exhibit Journalism; he serves also to show the pitiable and pitiful class of *filles entretenues*: the corruption of the body after the corruption of the mind.

The 'Petits Bourgeois' will follow, and the 'Frères de la Consolation,' as conclusion; nothing more will remain to be done in my Paris, but *artists*, the *theatre*, and the *savants*! I shall then have painted the great modern monster in all its faces. . . .

Without this fulness of heart, for you I should not have accomplished the tenth part of my work, I should not have had this ferocious courage. Repeat that word over to yourself in your

moments of melancholy, and you will discover the greatness of the cause by its effect.

It has done me good to read your journal. I shall read it more than once again to-morrow. It is now six o'clock. I must set to work to invent, and then write some little stupidities for Hetzel. I quit you, sending a thousand flowers from the heart.

Thursday: 7th.

'I am still somewhat ill, I even took to my bed during the day; I am now a little better, and go to dine with my doctor.

I have just finished the article for Hetzel, which, like all things forced, will be detestable.

Yesterday I consulted M. Roux, the successor (alas!) of Dapuytren. He has strongly advised me to take a journey on foot, as the only means to stop the tendency to cerebral inflammation, which has shown itself.

Adieu for to-day, celestial star, invoked and followed so religiously! Every day I say to myself, while thinking of your dear little household of three, 'I hope they are happy, with nothing to trouble them! I hope Lirette becomes more and more saintly, that Anna goes sometimes to the play (for her health, as she says so prettily), and

that Madame every now and then looks at the Neva on the side of Paris.'

As to myself, I can only think of the *rococo* drawing-room; and while thinking I make a little mental prayer to a human divinity, especially about nine o'clock in the evening, when tea-time makes me think you are taking your tea at the white wood table, of which I sometimes see the yellow shades, as well as the *samovar*. What friends inanimate things become when they surround those we love! There is nothing, even to the stupid elephant, which does not sometimes come to my mind. As to the *causeuse*, the little carpet, the Louis XIV. screen, the easy chair upon which you rest your noble and beloved head, all is worshipped.

Your melancholies have made me smile. I said to myself, 'She was not then in her easy chair, she was not in the corner looking at her fire?' But it would have been a pity not to have written those four pages; they are sublime, and if I had not a great respect for you, I should put them with pride into one of my books, to give you the delight of feeling yourself superior to scribblers *comme nous autres*. Your letter is a true diamond as to style and thought; you have *la bile inspiratrice, belle dame*. . . .

Sunday: 10th.

If I had any luck, I should sell the right of illustrating 'Eugénie Grandet,' the business of the 'Petit Bourgeois' would be arranged, and I should be out of these affairs altogether (I mean tiresome affairs). A new tragedy was yesterday performed at the Odéon; but I did not wish to go, as I am reserving myself for Wednesday, 'The Mystères de Paris,' at the Porte St.-Martin.

Thursday: 14th.

The 'Mystères' ended at half-past one o'clock this morning; I did not get back to Passy till three A.M. It is now one o'clock, and I am just up.

Fredrick was fearing for himself a congestion of the brain. I found him yesterday at mid-day in bed, he had just been above his knees in a mustard bath. He had twice lost his sight the evening before. The 'Mystères' is rubbish, but Fredrick's talent will make a *furore* of the 'Mystères.' As an actor he was sublime, such effects are not to be described, they must be seen. I am pleased with the success of the 'Mystères,' as it will give me time to finish 'Mercadet.'

The princes were in a stage box; and as the Prince de Joinville had never seen me, the Duc

de Nemours made himself cicerone and introduced me.

Sunday: 17th.

You know, dear Countess, there are days when the brain becomes inert; in spite of all my good resolutions, I have stayed in my chair all day, turning over the leaves of the '. . . Mu . . . sée . . . des . . . familles . . !'

What say you to this? Every now and then *looking* at the Daffinger,[1] seeing there the most sublime and charming creature in the world, but not one word of 'copy.' I wanted to get back to 'Madame de la Chanterie,' and I was only able to do two pages.

If you only knew in what a misanthropical condition I went to bed last night! . . . No—it was dreadful! But then, with what delight I have read your letter, the pages full of sincerity and affection! An hour of this celestial pleasure makes all the martyrdoms of human existence easy.

Yes, you are right to be proud of your child! It is especially when I see the best brought-up young persons here, of her own rank, that I repeat you are right to be proud of your Anna. Tell

[1] The name of a Viennese painter, who had drawn the miniature of Madame Hanska.

her I love her, for your sake, of whom she is the happiness and glory, and for the sake of her own angelic soul, of which I so well know the value.

You tell me, dear Countess, that in the midst of your success there is something in the supreme decision which has annoyed you, and you do not tell me what it is. Repair this omission, I entreat you, and do not let me bruise myself black in this uncertainty! Is it not grand to make oneself out so good, when one knows it is all of no use! Pardon me the pleasantry, dear Countess, it leads naturally to the declaration of your rights over a heart which belongs more to you than it does to me. Nothing, no change in the events of life, no woman, however lovely she may be, *nothing* can *move* that which *is* for ten years past, because I love your soul as much as your person, and for me you will always be the Daffinger. Do you know what it is that gives the element of durability to matters of sentiment? It is *la sorcellerie à froid*, where everything in you and about you has passed through a crucial examination and comparison, and every test has been to your honour. You, dear fraternal soul, you are that holy and noble and devoted creature to whom one dares to commit all one's life and happiness with perfect trust; you are the guiding

star and *la sicura ricchezza, senza brama,* above all. I understand you in everything, even to your melancholy fancies, which I love. If the hope of my life should fail, I should not kill myself, I would not become a priest; your remembrance alone would give me the strength to live; but I should go to some unknown corner in the Ariége or the Pyrenees, to die there slowly, doing nothing more, caring for nothing more in the world. I should go every two years to see Anna, and talk to her about you to my heart's content. I should write no more. Why should I? Are you not the whole world to me? To think what I suffer during only a day's delay when expecting a letter from you shows me I should die of grief. Oh! take care of yourself! Remember there is more than one life dependent upon yours! Each day my egotism, '*à deux*,' augments; each day hope gathers its treasures of envious hours, anticipations, and dreams. *Allons!*—how many things there are in this *allons!—allons!* Adieu! Yesterday I was melancholy; to-day, thanks to your adorable letter, I am gay and happy.

To M. Charles Nodier,[1] *Paris.*

1844.

Mon bon Nodier,—I know now for a certainty that my position as regards money is one of the reasons why my election is opposed by the Academy, and with extreme regret I write to beg you will use your influence for some one else instead of me.

If I am now debarred from entering the Academy by the most honourable poverty, I will never present myself again, if ever the day should come when prosperity shall grant me her favours. I am writing to this effect to our friend Victor Hugo, who has been interesting himself in my behalf.

God give your health, dear Nodier.

To Madame Hanska, St. Petersburg.

Paris: Feb. 28, 1844.

Dear Countess,—I have decided to conclude the seventh volume of 'La Comédie Humaine' with 'Le Lys dans la Vallée,' which certainly may stand for a 'Scène de la Vie de Province.' I do

[1] *La Rabouilleuse* ('un Ménage de Garçon en Province') is dedicated to him.

not want to have a line to write between now and October 1.

In spite of all you say about your plans, about Dresden, I cannot believe in them. You leave Petersburg the middle of May; you will be at home towards the end of June. Now, how do you expect it will be possible in the course of four months (July to October), to be put in possession of your rights, to have all the accounts of administration and wardship given up to you, and to have re-established the *status quo* of your personal government? Oh, if you knew how I count on my fingers and calculate all these difficulties! they cause me frightful, pitiless, implacable hours! You are my life; the least things that concern you seem serious events, and those two months I spent at St. Petersburg have, alas! enlightened me upon all the difficulties of your affairs. No! you will never start in October, for I know your anxious tenderness for your child. You will never let her run the risk of a winter journey. At all events, dear Countess, on your return to Vierzschovnia, you must examine carefully all the *buts*, the *ifs*, the *fors*, the *ayes*, and the *noes*, and decide whether I may come. Be a judge, and not a pleader! If your high wisdom shall decide in the negative, then I will plunge into hard work, and

try to become engrossed and carried away by it, in default of the resignation which I cannot promise. A year will have been lost! But that is a lifetime for a being who finds a whole life compressed into a day, when that day is passed beside you!

I quit you now to go and dine with M. de Margonne, and to pay a short visit to the Princess Belgiojoso who lives next door.

29th.

I went to fetch the finished proofs of 'Les Petits Bourgeois.' The printing office where they are being set up is close by St.-Germain-des-Prés. The thought took me to enter the church, where a cupola is being painted, and I prayed for you and for your dear child before the altar of the Virgin. Tears came into my eyes as I prayed to God to preserve you both in health and life. My thought shed its rays as far as the Neva; on returning to earth, perhaps, I may have brought with me some faint reflex from the Throne before which we both of us worship. With what fervour, and warmth, and self-abandonment I feel myself bound to you for ever—for time and for eternity, as *dévots* say.

As I returned I bought on the Quai, for fifteen

sous, the 'Mémoires de Lauzun,' which I had never read. I glanced through the book in the omnibus, on the road to Passy, where on arrival your slave replaced himself in the arm-chair whence he now writes to you whilst waiting for dinner.

How strange it is that a fine courageous fellow —a man who seems not to have been wanting in good feeling on occasion, should with so much levity dishonour the woman whom he professes to have loved! I believe vanity, being the dominant side of his character, stifled all that was really good and generous in him.

After having read and closed this bad book, I exclaimed to myself, What happiness it is to love one woman only! This is both a heartfelt expression and the result of reasoning and observation, for I can analyse you with the most perfect coolness, and I perceive with happiness and conviction that no one can be compared to you. I know not in the world such another perfect intelligence, a more noble heart, a more sweet and charming temper, a more upright character, a sounder judgment, nor any one who is so wise and reasonable.

I could say more, only I am afraid of being scolded, yet all this justifies and explains the impulse, stronger to-day even than in 1833, which

makes my heart beat at the sight of a page of your 'Toppfer,' which will lie on my table for the rest of my days, and my delight at the sight of the Daffinger.[1]

Ah! you do not know all I felt when—at the end of that court, the smallest pebbles of which remain engraved on my memory as well as the long flower-beds and the coach houses—I saw your sweet face at the window. I lost all consciousness of being in the body, and when I spoke to you I was stupefied. This stupefaction lasted for two days, and then the torrent, stopped in its course, only dashed forwards with gathered force. 'What must she think of me?' was the phrase of a madman, which I repeated again and again, with terror. No, it is true; and you must believe me when I say that even yet, after all these years, I have not become accustomed to knowing you. Centuries would not suffice, and life is so short! You saw the fact in those two months. I was in the same state of ecstasy and bewilderment when I went away as I was the first day when I beheld you once more. Of all the people to whom you introduced me there, I can recollect nothing, everything has vanished, evaporated, and left no trace; but I can tell exactly all the smallest details

[1] The portrait of Madame Hanska by this artist.

of all that surrounded you, even to the number of the steps of the staircase, even to the flower-pots massed in the corners of that staircase.

March 1.

Awaking at two o'clock this morning, I found your journal No. 10, which I had only read very rapidly yesterday. I have read it now again, and it took me an hour. It is now three o'clock! Was it an hour? . . . It was a thousand years of paradise. How strange! In this journal you express the same fears about the month of October which I mentioned a few days ago.

Have we two thoughts? You speak of the pain at your heart, and yesterday I was praying for your health at St.-Germain-des-Prés! Do you not know, then, that your life is my life, that your death would be mine also?

Your joys are my joys, your griefs my griefs.

. . . . . .

The idea of your novel[1] is very pretty, and if you wish to please me immensely, you will write it out and send it. I will correct and publish it in my name. You will thus not injure the whiteness of your stockings, nor stain your pretty fingers

[1] *Modeste Mignon* is here meant; Balzac published it in the *Journal des Débats*, in place of the *Petits Bourgeois*.

with ink for the good of the public, yet you enjoy all the pleasures of authorship, when you see all I shall retain of your charming and beautiful prose.

Adieu for to-day; leisure is gone, work calls me. To-morrow I shall read your adorable letter over again, and reply to it.

. . . . . .

Nodier has died as he lived, with grace and friendliness; he had all his mind, intelligence, and sensibility to the end. He died a Catholic; he confessed, and asked to receive the Sacraments. He not only died with calmness, but with joy. Five minutes before his death he asked after all his grandchildren, and said, 'None are ill? Then all is well.'

He wished to be buried in his daughter's wedding veil. Mass was said in his room, and he listened with attention, and reverence. In short, he was all that was becoming, charming, and kind, to the last moment. He sent me word that he had been deeply touched by my letter, and that he regretted he must die before he had obtained from the Academy a reparation of their injustice towards me. He said he had always wished I might be his successor, and that he still hoped it might be so. I give you these details, knowing the interest they have for you.

Perhaps you have thought I took the news of the success of your lawsuit coldly; in fact, my only satisfaction in the matter is, that you are thus delivered from your legal annoyances. Believe me, though I care little about fortune for myself, whatever may be said to the contrary, I am too devoted to you not to wish you all the comfort of easy circumstances, as nothing of good or agreeable in life can be enjoyed whilst one is struggling against misfortune. If I am destined to live always apart from you, I shall none the less feel a childlike joy at the thought that you are at last free from care, both present and future, and that you are now able to do good to all around you, and to follow all your instincts of compassionate and generous goodness, and I have the satisfaction of saying with Pehméja, 'I have nothing, but Dubreuil is rich!'

Let us both believe, that the future will be bright for me also, in this way at least; and that my debts once paid, I may be able to give myself up to that leisure and repose, so much desired, so long expected, and so dearly bought, before I fall into that long sleep where one rests from all things at last, and especially from oneself. . . .

March 4.

I know not if it is a phase of the brain, but I have no continuity of will. I make plans, I conceive books, and when they should be written everything escapes me. . . .

The 'Petits Bourgeois' lies there on my desk, the 'Débats' has advertised the work; you know in whose name it is written. I shrink from beginning it, the mountain of proofs frightens me, and I fly for refuge to the shores of the Neva, where 'Petits Bourgeois' are not, and I sink into a blue easy chair so enticing to *far niente*.

What reading will ever please me like those dry academic notes of Mignet, or any other books which I happened to take up in your drawing-room, while waiting for the rustle of a silk dress . . . the emotion caused by the sound of footsteps, or the noise of an opening door. . . ? If I could draw, I would make the picture from memory of the *moujik* who lighted the stove.

I can see again the little end of unsewn cord on the back of the *causeuse* before the ivy. . . . These are my grand occupations. From time to time I recall to memory all the toilettes I ever saw you wear, from the white muslin lined with blue, on the first day at Peterhof, to the mag-

nificence of the dress covered with lace in which you went out in the evening.

Ah, to me the poem best known by heart, and which will live for ever, are the verses, the stanzas, the cantos of the poem of those two months.

Yes, I shall have loved but once in my life, and happily this affection will fill up my life to the end.

But I must put an end to these holy orgies of remembrance, for I am determined to appear with brilliancy in the newspaper.

I place in this enclosure the first flower open in my garden: it smiled at me this morning. I send it laden with a thousand feelings and fancies, which cannot be written.

To M. David (d'Angers), Paris.

1844.

My dear David,—I have now called six or seven times without finding you at home. I wished to tell you that I have been in bed six weeks very ill, and now I am ordered to Carlsbad. I must see you, as I cannot give my address except verbally, and only five or six persons know it. This is the reason of my perseverance and of my regret.

You would have found your model looking very much thinner. I had, as a reward for all my labour, an inflammation of the liver.

I learnt, through Hippolyte Valmore, that your *chef-d'œuvre* had improved in passing from clay to marble; which we had thought was impossible. I shall make one more effort to see you before my departure, when I hope to be more fortunate, for, believe me, I feel for you quite as much friendship as admiration.

To M. l'Abbé Eglé, Vicar-General of the Archbishopric, Paris.

Paris: June 1844.

Monsieur le Vicaire-général—I did myself the honour of calling on you to-day, in company with Mdlle. Borel, who is purposing, by your advice, to enter the order of 'The Visitation.' She is anxious to place herself under your guidance. Not having been fortunate enough to meet with you, we made enquiry at what hour to-morrow it would be convenient for you to receive us and to bestow on this future saint that kind protection and counsel which you were so good as to promise me.

To M. l'Abbé Eglé.

Passy: June 1844.

Monsieur le Vicaire-général—I was quite ignorant, when I presented myself yesterday, with a note written in case of not finding you, how greatly you were suffering from the fatigues attending your present duties in company with his Eminence. This poor girl, whose vocation causes every hour of delay to be a source of pain to her, is very unhappy to be still at large in this Paris, which some have called the 'Ante-chamber of Hell,' and which, in truth, it is for many, even for the authors who describe it. She is especially anxious to pay her respects to her spiritual protector, but I have had so much difficulty to make her understand that the duties of the general are not those of the soldier, and that at present you and his Eminence are at your posts, that I trust you will send me a line consigning the care of this poor troubled soul either to the Vicar of Passy or the Abbé Jousselin, our previous curé; and, will you kindly name the day and hour when I may, without trespassing too much, present Mdlle. Borel to you?

Address your answer to me in the name of M. de Brugnol, Rue Basse 19, Passy, granting me the additional favour of forgetting that I dwell there, for the secret of my retreat is

important to my peace of mind. When you have the extreme goodness to give me a line for the lady superior of the Convent of the Visitation, where you are about to send Mdlle. Borel, will you particularly urge that some consideration may be had for her modest fortune. My motive for being so anxious you should see this saintly girl, is, that you might use your influence to induce her to enter the order of St.-Thomas de Villeneuve.

The persecutions carried on at the place she comes from were so bitter that the Dominicans of St. Petersburg gave her and her companion their 'Cross' to bring away and place with the Dominicans of Paris. These poor fathers are living in dread of being suddenly driven away. This will give you an idea of the sufferings in the north, and will show you in what high esteem Mdlle. Borel was held, to be entrusted with this mission.

I am much grieved to know that you are so worn out with fatigue, still more so to have failed meeting with you. Hard work laid me up with inflammation of the liver for six weeks, but I am now recovering. If I forgot all about the Fête Dieu and the confirmations, you will forgive me, I hope, on account of my sufferings.

With deep respect, &c.

To M. Auber, Member of the 'Institute,' Paris.

My dear Master,—I quite agree with you, and the line 'On sent dans l'air pur,' &c.,[1] is the prettiest. It would, perhaps, be desirable to invert the order of the lines, putting that first and setting the air to it. In fact, the order of the thoughts would almost exact this, for it is because, the angel of roses has blessed the flowers that they are anxious to view themselves in the drops of dew.

Will you kindly undertake to make this alteration yourself, and set the music to this line, pardoning me all the trouble I give you. Ever since I knew how much you have to do, I have had remorse.

I have at least the pleasure of expressing to you my admiration for your high talent.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Passy: October 11, 1844.

Dear Countess,—I have received your letter of September 25; it came yesterday evening, which makes only fifteen days. I am not very well. Yesterday, I went to see my doctor. This

[1] Referring to some verses which were published with the numbers of *Modeste Mignon* (see I. 452).

neuralgia must be attacked by leeches and a small blister; this will take three or four days. I wrote 'César Birotteau' with my feet in mustard; now I am writing 'Les Paysans' with my head in opium. I have written six thousand lines for 'La Presse' in ten days; I must finish by October 30. Your letter is another reason; as if you travel, I must be ready..

Before the departure of M. Gavault they raised their offer to thirty thousand francs for Les Jardies; but the value of the plot of ground in the Allée des Veuves is increasing, and I have given orders to the notary to back out of his offers . . . Am I prudent in doing this? I will wait; perhaps I may find a house ready built and at a reasonable price.

This neuralgia throws me wrong altogether, for I have still a work in hand for Chlendowski, who is very shuffling, as you said he would prove, and you were right, as you always are. It is possible I may be paid; but one thing is quite certain, that I will have nothing more to do with him.

It was well you gave me some hope about Dresden, otherwise I should have died of vexation over my work in these latter days. The greatness

of my affections has made all the great difficulties of my life seem small.

Everybody is surprised to hear me say that I will finish the twenty thousand lines of 'Les Paysans' in the course of this month of October.

Nobody believed it, not even the people at the newspaper office, but when they saw me produce six thousand lines in six days they were thoroughly startled. The compositors are reading the work—a thing which does not happen once in a hundred times; a buzz of admiration went round, which is all the more remarkable as the book goes against the feelings of the democratic populace.

You tell me you have still time to receive a letter from me before your departure; I hasten, as you see, to send you news of myself, both body and mind.

I have not been out of the house for twenty days; literally, I am living in the *stupefaction* which so much hard work has brought on; for I have a surplus on hand of little articles for Hetzel, &c. The poor fellow wants twenty thousand copies of 'Le Diable' to be sold, and he is printing fifteen thousand!

Your servant has contributed to this, he having put in all the exquisite rubbish which pleases the multitude. To pay twenty thousand

francs of debts, to finish the 'Paysans,' and then in December to find myself on the road to Dresden, is my present dream; it will be realised,—it must be! I know not how I shall pass through the year 1845. There are times when one has the *madness* of hope; I have it now. The tension of my life towards this end has been so great that now I feel as if all the strands of the cord were giving way under the strain. I do not care either to think or to feel. Oh! who could describe to you the hours I have spent during these last twenty days, with my head resting on my hand, contemplating the drawing-room of St. Petersburg and of Vierzschovnia, those two poles of my thought, whilst the centre stood before me in its frame—hope and reality, the past and the future all clashed together; it was a conflict of memories which made me giddy. Ah! there you stand firmly rooted in my life, in my heart, in my soul; there is not a movement of my pen, nor of my existence, nor of my thought, which is not a ray of which you are not the centre, you alone, you the too dearly loved, whatever you may say to the contrary.

. . . . . .

Yesterday M. Nacquart said, abruptly, when writing his prescription, 'You will break down

under all this.' 'No,' replied I; 'there is a special providence for me—a divinity stronger than all maladies put together.' 'I hope,' said he, 'if you are going to be married, that you will take entire rest for two years.' 'Two years, doctor? I should take rest to the end of my life—to my last breath, if by rest you mean to be happy.'

16th.

This interruption, dear one, has been caused by obedience to the doctor's commands. I have been confined to bed for three or four days; but this morning all the symptoms and horrible pains of this inflammation have ceased. In three days, at furthest, I shall re-commence my labours. These few days of enforced idleness have been days of happiness to me, for whenever I am not working with the absorption of all my faculties, moral and physical, I think unceasingly of 1845. I arrange about houses; I furnish them; I fancy myself installed in them, and I feel happy. I think over the few and rare moments when we have been together, and I am vexed with myself, for not having prolonged these periods of gentle and confidential intercourse.

. . . . . .

If ever we reach Dresden, you shall, dear Countess, have perfumes enough to last the rest

of your days—this I promise you. We have, then, you and I, the same vices, for I carry the passion for delicate odours to a degree which makes it a fault.

Alas! I see plainly that I must now say adieu; but remember you have left me a long month without any letters, and you are neither in Paris, nor yet have you *feuilletons* to write, by way of excuse.

I am told David has finished the marble of my bust, and that it is in no respect less admirable than the clay. No doubt, it will be in the next Exhibition.

17th.

Adieu, dearly loved friend; examine the young Count Minszech[1] carefully; the whole future life of your child is at stake. I am very glad you have found in him the first point necessary to the happiness of both parties—similarity of tastes and personal sympathy; but, nevertheless, study him; be as severe in your judgment as if he did not please you; principles, *caractère*, firmness, all must be observed. But am I not stupid to offer all these suggestions to the best, the most devoted of mothers!

[1] The Comte Georges Minszech, the betrothed of Mademoiselle Anna Hanska.

To Madame Hanska, Vierzschovnia.

Passy: October 21, 1844.

I am very well. I have begun to work again —a piece of good news worth writing. Oh, dearest! a year is a year. One's heart is not to be thus deceived. It suffers all its griefs in spite of the deceitful consolations of hope. What is hope but a disguise for sorrow?

I went out for the first time the day before yesterday. I bought a clock of royal magnificence, and two vases in *céladon grenat*, no less magnificent. All for next to nothing!

A great piece of news! A rich amateur wants to possess my Florentine furniture; no doubt, he will come to see it. I shall ask forty thousand francs. Another piece of news! The 'Christ,' by Giradon, bought for two hundred francs, is valued at five thousand, and at twenty thousand with the frame by Brustolone. And you laugh, dear Countess, at my doings in the kingdom of Bric-à-braquie. Yesterday M. Nacquart violently opposed my selling these magnificent things, even at the price I name. He said, 'In a few months by hard work you will be out of your present eclipse; these magnificent objects will then be your rays!' 'I like money better,' said I.

You see Harpagon is become the poet and the poet Harpagon. Dear one, believe me, I cannot continue suffering thus. Will you take it into consideration? . . . When the 'Paysans' are finished, besides the articles due to Chlendowski, I shall claim from you the permission to rejoin you in your steppes, if your passport difficulties are to be thus prolonged to all eternity.

I have found the most splendid pedestal for the bust by David; which last is said to be an astonishing success. This beautiful stand only cost me three hundred francs; the late M. Alibert, for whom it was made, was to have paid at least fifteen or sixteen thousand francs. I should like your advice as to what I ought to do. I cannot stay here where I am; and four steps from my present quarters is a house the rent of which will be from a thousand to fifteen hundred francs, where one might live quite as well for fifteen hundred francs a year as for fifteen thousand. I should like to take it for a few years, and establish myself in it. I could then easily economise the value of a small house in Paris. As to your projects, I would rather renounce tranquillity at once than obtain it at such a price. When one has upset one's country and intrigued at Court like Cardinal Retz, it may be permitted to retire to Commercy to

pay one's debts; but in our present *bourgeois* age, to go away without paying everybody is not allowed. It would seem like running away from one's creditors.

Que voulez-vous, belle dame! We are perhaps not so grand, not so resplendent, but we certainly are better conducted—more honourable, I may say, than the *grands seigneurs* of the *grand siècle.* It may be, perhaps, because we attach another meaning to the words honour and duty, or that we place them in other things which would account for it naturally. They were actors on a large stage, on which they did their best to be admired. They were paid to do so; but in these days it is we who are the real paying public, which only acts in itself and for itself. Do not speak to me, then, of Switzerland or of Italy, nor of anything of the kind. My best, my only country is the space between the wall of the *octroi* and the fortifications of Paris. If I were to quit it, you well know that it would be for your sake alone; I should have done so already, had you so commanded. Labour, then, with your *petites pattes de souris blanche,* to enlarge the hole of your dungeon in order that the hour of your liberation may be hastened.

Adieu! Take good care of your health, your child, and your possessions, since they engross

you to the extent of making you forget your best friends.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

January 1845.

My dear Dablin,—Here is the MS. corrected, and the proofs of 'Les Chouans.' Ever since I began to place the name of a friend at the beginning of my works, this one has been destined for you; but the chances which rule over books have decreed that since 1834 'Les Chouans' has not been reprinted, although many persons have considered the work better than its reputation.

If I were one of those who make a mark in their century, this work might one day have a great value, but neither you nor I will live to know this; therefore, see only in this dedication a proof of the friendship which has remained in my heart, although you have not cultivated it much of late years.

Tout à vous.

To M. Théodore Dablin, Paris.

January 1845.

My dear Dablin,—My sister tells me that a word I let fall has given you pain. To believe me but half a friend, is not to know me at all.

It will soon be eighteen years ago, since, one Easter day, passing through the Place Vendôme between you and M. Pepin Le-Halleur by the foot of the Column—I was then very young, but I felt conscious what I should one day become—you said that honours and property changed people's nature. I replied that nothing could ever change me in what concerned my affections. This remains true. I never was false. To-day, all my true friends are on the footing of the most perfect equality. If you came oftener to see me, you would learn this. In spite of any reputation I may have acquired, I am still much of a child; I have only the egotism of hard workers; sixteen hours a day dedicated to the making of a literary monument which will be gigantic, leave no time at my disposal. This privation of the pleasures of the affections is the heaviest tax I can pay to futurity. As to the pleasures of the world, or of life, Art has killed them all, without regret on my part. I think intelligence and affection are two things which make all men equal.

Thus, my dear Dablin, never apply in the singular what I intend for the mass. I have called four times to see you; you were, no one knew where. If I do not come myself to refresh your troubled heart, this letter will tell you that

I do not believe there is much to repair, for my astonishment was very great when Laura told me I had given you pain.

Adieu! so long a letter is a luxury to me.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

January 1845.

Chère,—So you have ceased to write to me, not even once in three months! You leave me baking in the heat of a gigantic work which grows bigger and bigger at every effort. Oh! it is very wrong of you! I talked much about you yesterday with a young professor, who, though he was not the rose, had lived near it at Frapesle. We sang a hymn of praise in your honour.

You have no notion what the 'Comédie Humaine' has become. As a work of literature, it is more vast than the Cathedral of Bourges is in architecture. Sixteen years have passed, dear ungrateful friend, since I have worked upon it, and it will take eight years more to complete it. I am waiting till I have finished my present edition, before sending it to you, always on the condition that you burn all I have already given you, which is too full of faults to be near such a celestial perfection as yourself. When shall I

see you again in my workshop, where you have left so sweet a perfume, causing you to be constantly regretted? *Allons*, adieu!

To Madame Hanska, Dresden.

Passy: February 15, 1845.

May I write without imprudence, before receiving a counter-order? Your last letter counselled me not to write again to Dresden. However, I take my pen in hand, on the invitation contained in your letter of the 8th.

Since you, as well as your child, are absolutely determined to see your Lirette[1] again, there is but one way for it, viz. to come to Paris.

You come to Frankfort, you settle yourself there, and propose to make a tour on the shores of the Rhine; beginning by Mayence, where you will find me waiting for you with a passport for my sister and my niece. You take the *malle-poste*, and you will stay from March 15 till May 15 in Paris, without saying a word about it to anyone. As you will not have seen anybody in the first days of your arrival at Frankfort, no attention will be roused, perhaps only on your return will you be noticed. Get from your diplomatist a

[1] A young *protége* of Madame Hanska, who passed her novitiate in a convent in Paris.

passport for Frankfort and the Rhine. You will only be obliged to return by Coblenz, Cologne, &c., if the passport is viséd for those places. You will see the great city at your ease. There are twelve theatres for your child, since she likes them, and you wish to amuse her.

This will necessitate many drives, without counting the visits to the convent, which would be more frequent than if I consulted your taste alone, but your wishes are half merged in those of your child, so I never know which of you desires a thing or does not. In these affairs, courage and secresy are needed, and very little baggage, only absolute necessaries.

Here, everything can be had of better quality and cheaper than anywhere else, guided by the prices I have seen you pay for your dresses and *chiffons* in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany.

At Chaillot, you will find a small suite of rooms furnished by my care, servants, &c., all, for two months. In the morning, you can walk or go in a cab to Paris. In the evening, you will have your carriage. By following this programme, it will not be possible for you to be recognised, as you will not go into society.

Dear Countess, the uncertainty of your arrival at Frankfort has weighed heavily on me, for how

can I begin to work, whilst awaiting a letter, which may cause me to set out immediately? I have not written a line of the 'Paysans.' In a material point of view, all this has been fatal to me. Not even your penetrating intelligence can comprehend this, as you know nothing of Parisian economy, nor the difficulties in the life of a man who is trying to live on six thousand francs a year.

I ought to leave Passy, where I am much hampered; but this I dare not do, nor undertake anything, owing to your uncertainty. The greatest evil of all is my idleness; how can I throw myself into any absorbing work, when there is the chance of setting out to see you again? I have thus been on the tenter-hooks, tortured as I never was before, in a triple martyrdom of the head, the heart, and business affairs, with all my imagination to help! It had so violent an effect on me that I declare to you I feel stupefied, so stupefied that to escape going mad I went to play lansquenet in an evening at Madame Merlin's and other places.'

Luckily, I neither won nor lost. I went to the play, I dined out; in fact, I led a dissipated life for a fortnight. I shall now try to finish the 'Paysans,' and a little bit of the book for Chlendowski.

I send you, by the Messageries, Volume XI.

of the 'Comédie Humaine.' In it you will find 'Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes.' Vol. IV. contains your 'Modeste Mignon,' the end of 'Béatrix;' then, the 'Diable à Paris.'

These books may amuse you: in any case, give me your opinion as usual, that is, with the sincerity of a fraternal mind, and the sagacity and certainty of a true critic. If the reduced copy of my bust by David is finished, I will send it also.

The finishing of the 'Paysans' is an absolute necessity, to which everything else must give way; it is necessary not only as regards literature and my reputation for punctuality in my engagements, but it is also essential to my interests. This year is decisive for my affairs; in forty-five days the printing of the 'Comédie Humaine' will be finished. The editors are employing the two largest printing houses in Paris, and I have to look over double the former quantity of proofs. A round sum is the result for me; but I cannot leave Passy until my most pressing debts are paid.

I see there is nothing for it, but to order myself to work for a month, without looking either forward or backward. . . .

If anything could allay the raging temper I have been in, it is your letter telling me that all

these delays, all these uncertainties, have been caused by your health.

That word is a talisman, it would make me stand silent, with my finger jammed in a doorway. Therefore, I beg you will not think of me while your precious health is at stake, that dear and precious health which gives you that fresh, young, and radiant aspect.

I know not what I would not do, if by some magical power I could see for an instant the smile on your lips, the sunshine of joy and contentment in your eyes, and your little white glancing fingers playing with the pearls of your necklace. At such moments, when I think of all this, I am ready to commit any possible folly, to make the sacrifice of everything, to leave the 'Paysans' and the newspapers to take their chance, and keep myself two years longer in debt, only to see you again, if but for an hour. But alas, you know how I am bound by the heavy claims of money. I only dream of Dresden. I know by heart the façade, and the side of the Hôtel de Saxe. I can tell you how the window curtains are hung. I see them all before me. And the terrace! Oh, how I wish to be there!

Allons, adieu! I find I say farewell in my letters as I used to say good-night in the Hôtel

Koutaissof at St. Petersburg; we walked from the sofa to the door, and from the door to the sofa, for more than ten minutes, without having the courage to say the definite good-night.

Say to yourself, not an hour passes without your being in my thoughts, for as regards my heart you are there always. Did I tell you, the *bœuf gras* of this year has been named 'Le Père Goriot'? which has given rise to many witticisms and *calembours* at my expense. If I could only finish the second part of the 'Paysans' in eight days, I would set out immediately, and in six days after I should see you.

To Madame Émile de Girardin, Paris.

Paris: March 1845.

Madame,—As I acquitted myself so well, the day before yesterday, in the presentation of Princess Galitzin, allow me to indulge in the belief that I shall not be less fortunate in the fulfilment of another mission towards yourself.

You have expressed a wish, I believe, to see Madame de Castries; she enjoins me to tell you that she will be charmed to receive you.

I have received the precious intelligence that my stupidity in respect of a false Rességuier

has become all that the *esprit Français* could make of it in the way of ingenious application; the young man dreams of you with the imagination of a *man of sixteen* (as Lautour would say), and I have gratified the height of his desires while intending only a poor pleasantry. I have therefore been lucky in my blundering, but now I will run no risk with any but yourself; for you alone are able to offer similar chances.

Accept, I beg, the expression of my sentiments, and the most affectionate homage of him who has the honour to be your humble servant.

To M. Armand Dutacq, Paris.

Paris: March 18, 1845.

My dear Dutacq,—You have sent me nothing. *That counts one!*

You have probably seen Dumont; a day must be appointed, and I must be apprised. *That counts two!*

Now, there is an idea that Amyot the publisher, Rue de la Paix, one of those who are most favourably situated for a sale, and who wishes to establish his son, might undertake the illustration of 'Eugénie Grandet,' or of the 'Médecin de Campagne.' Does this suit you? There are

more elements of tranquillity here than elsewhere. *That counts three!*

I fancy that Lemud and Meissonier would do something very good, and we should have a fine property.

A thousand friendly things. . . .

To Madame Hanska, Dresden.

Paris: Sunday, 2 o'clock, April 3, 1845.

I received your letter of the 27th, yesterday. On reading it, I know not what to think of mine. Though my intentions were good, I seem to have hurt you. This is enough. . . . . I certainly write in haste, without reading over my letters, and I proceed without reflection. If I had read this one over, I might—as with many others in which *I had spoken too loudly*—have offered it a sacrifice to Vulcan.

I have decided to procure an acre and a half at Monceau, for a house, offices, and garden: it will cost ninety thousand francs, and fifty thousand francs to build the house; altogether, one hundred and forty thousand. It will all be finished and paid for in 1846; I shall not then have a penny of debt.

I have done all in my power to remain at Passy, where I am quiet and comfortable, but all has failed. I have notice to quit in October of

the present year. I must move to Paris, and wait two years in lodgings, until my little house can be built at Monceau. I shall look for a house in the Faubourg St.-Germain—it is an expense of some thousand francs, which I regret greatly. My money matters, even more than my works, will imperiously oblige me to remain in Paris the month of April. Another Academician is dead, *Soumet*; five or six others are verging towards the grave; the course of events alone may make me an Academician, in spite of your banter and dislike.

Paris: April 1845. Sunday, 2 A.M.

I am getting up. I look at my Daffinger with delight. I received your letter yesterday. Figure to yourself, dear, that I had a real misfortune with it. Your letter had received a blot of ink, by means of which it had stuck to another letter, and there was a delay in consequence duly attested by the post-office. The post-mistress, who had witnessed my anxiety for two days, called joyfully when she saw me: 'Monsieur, there is a letter!' and she held it up with a delight that did her honour. I read it on my way home, walking slowly by retired ways. To read such beautiful things addressed to oneself is enough to make one never write another line, oneself, but remain couched at the feet of one's sovereign, like her

faithful hound. Also, I went to sleep, for I must confess that for two days I had not closed my eyes, so much this delay had disquieted me. If I have no longer forty sheets to write, I have nevertheless nineteen; and yet you see that, instead of getting on with my MS., I go on writing to you, and I shall go on in the same way all night. I read your letter over again, I reply to it, and I have not yet one line of copy written. I have read with tears in my eyes all the kind and moving things you say on the subject of our respective positions. But all I write to you ought to prove that what you look upon as beyond the reach of a man, and to be the exclusive quality of a woman, is only the stuff out of which my life is made. You know too well that I think only of you, and that at every moment when I finish a letter to you I feel as if we were separating; I feel a deep and bitter sadness. There are a thousand things to say to you, of which I have forgotten three-fourths. Write to me very regularly. *Adieu à bientôt, j'espère.*

To Madame Hanska, Dresden.

Paris: April 10, 1845.

Good-bye to baskets! The vintage is over, dear Countess! The house in the Rue Fontaine

is an abomination; I must stand by Monceau. The business of the illustration of the 'Petites Misères' is finished, and I pocket about seven thousand francs. I am to have reprints of the 'Physiologie du Mariage,' and some other works; lastly, the affair of the 'Paysans' will be finished in a fortnight; so I advance in the matter of my liquidation with giant strides, and not, as you say, little by little. Whether I can get two parts of the 'Paysans' done in twelve days is a problem, as at present I have not a single line written. You and Dresden have turned my head, I do not know what will become of me! Nothing was more fatal than the indecision in which you kept me those three months. If I had left on January 1, and returned on February 28, I should have been more forward, and I should also have had two good months like those of St. Petersburg. Dear sovereign, how can you expect me to conceive two ideas or write two phrases, with a head and heart agitated as mine have been since last November; it is enough to make a man crazy! I have drowned myself in coffee in utter despair, it has done nothing for me, except to increase the nervous fluttering in my eyes, and I have written nothing; this is the situation to-day, April 10. I have on my back 'La Presse,' which sends to me

every day for copy; and the 'Paysans,' which is my first long work. I am between two despairs, one not to see you, the other a literary and financial vexation, the worry of *amour propre*. Oh, Charles II. might well say 'But she?' . . . . to everything his ministers laid before him.

April 18.

You write: 'I desire much to see you!' Well, when you hold this letter in your little fingers, I trust they will tremble somewhat, for I shall be near you, at Eisenach or at Erfurt: how do I know where? I shall follow my letter closely. I write to-day, Friday, and I shall set out on Sunday at the latest.

What! you may receive an order from your Government to return home, without my having seen you? How! For five months past I have not scribbled a word, and then—— you say I have been amusing myself?

But you know my life by the letters, in which it is written day by day, hour by hour, and minute by minute; and it is thus you read them, when you know my sole pleasures are to think of you; and to prove it in writing, I have passed the last five months in saying every day, 'I shall start to-morrow. I shall see her, if it is only a month, if

it is only ten minutes, I shall see her!' Do not write again; expect me.

To Madame Hanska, Dresden.

Paris: September 10, 1845.

This morning I have only ten sheets to write, to finish all I owe to Chlendowski, viz., to finish the 'Petites Misères,' and to-morrow I shall begin the last part of 'Splendeurs et Misères;' it makes six sheets of the 'Comédie Humaine,' which will take ten days, that will bring me to the 20th; it will take as many days to write the six sheets for Souverain, that will occupy me to the 30th. As things are, I think I may start in the first days of October, and reach Dresden on the 10th, to leave again on the 5th of November: this will be nearly a month, dear Countess! As soon as my letter reaches you, do not forget to send me Anna's arms in colour, as well as your own, and those of Georges. Let all these little things be accurate. If there are supporters, let them be drawn, as it is possible Froment may need them for what he is doing for Georges and Anna.

I feel my faculties more brilliant than ever. I am sure my twelve sheets, which will make two romances of six sheets each, will be worthy of their predecessors. I say this to calm the

anxiety of your fraternal soul *à propos* to the reaction of the body on the mind, besides proving, for the hundred millionth time, that I always tell you the real truth, and never hide the smallest trifle whether good or bad.

Pray go, if you think it necessary, to Töplitz or anywhere else, provided you are true to your Sarmatian promise.

Meanwhile I reduce my work to the simplest figure. Towards the 20th of April I come to the North to contemplate you in the midst of all your grandeur.

Laurent-Jan has just been here; he has diverted and amused me, but he has stolen three hours.

Thursday, 11th.

I have worked all day; seven sheets are done of the sixteenth and last volume of the 'Comédie Humaine.' I thought much of my star—too much, alas, for my labour and repose. I went to the post for nothing.

Friday.

Your letter at last! Does anyone know all that the words, 'a letter,' mean! A happiness to know where you are, what you are doing, what you think!

What an exquisite page that is upon the families of cathedrals and cemeteries! . . . Ah! you know how to write! But I must quit you, to go to Froment Meurice to see about Georges' cane and execute your sovereign commands. . . .

Dear Countess, the cane is magnificent, you will all be *archisatisfaits.* Anna's jewels are sent by one of Rothschild's couriers, addressed to Frankfort, care of Baron Anselm de Rothschild.

Sunday, 4 A.M.

At half-past eight this morning I am going to visit carefully the house belonging to old Salluon, and to see the piece cut off by the road. In my letter of to-morrow you will know my last determination. Alas! I cannot write next week, I must finish Chlendowski's six sheets during those tiresome days. I will not let this strange Pole, who only speaks ill of me, have anything more of mine. You know all I have done for him against my own interests. In ten days I hope to owe him nothing.

Dear Providence of my life! What true and touching goodness there is in your travels amongst the dealers in *bric-à-brac*! If you knew my happiness, my *gratitude,* at having obtained the affection of a soul so great and valiant as yours, you would

be touched by it; and your heart would feel the flood of life which mine sends forth to yours; there is infinity in its tenderness. Nothing can exhaust the source whence it flows. You may step out of your angelic character and scold me, using hard words even, but I shall always be the same. I am bound by ties which nothing can break.

I should die of grief if any misfortune happened to you.

Soon to see you; to-morrow to write to you; an eternity to love you!

To Madame Hanska, Dresden.

Wednesday, October 15, 1845.

Dear Countess,—I leave Paris by the mail of the 22nd at the same time you are leaving Mulhausen; on the 23rd at five o'clock I shall be at Chalons, where it is I who will hand you out of your carriage.

My place is taken and paid for. I have nothing, except the dumb language of the heart, in which to thank you for the adorable letter No. 2, with its brilliant gaiety, the sweet treasure of your charming mind, which the fine weather has restored. As you once said, 'Only evil-doers can remain sad in the presence of the joyful sun.'

I have thanked God, with tears, who has restored you to health, which you only value for the sake of those who belong to you and who love you—that is to say, your children and your old and faithful slave. Each time I approach you, breathe the same air, feel your heart, your presence, I come back desperate against the obstacles which hinder me from remaining in heaven. Accordingly I work, God only knows how hard, for God only knows the motive. When this letter reaches your hands, it is more than likely that I shall have no more debts, except those owing to my family. The Jardies will be paid for this week. I have been five times to M. Gavault without finding him, also I have been four times to the office of the 'Epoch' with no result; but I will tell you about everything hereafter, when we have a whole day's journey in a boat from Chalons to Lyons, and another from Lyons to Avignon. It is stupid to fill a letter with business matters. I shall take measures to secure lodgings for you, as in former journeys, for I think you will be obliged to halt sometimes to rest a little.

Baden has been for me a bouquet of sweet flowers without a thorn. We lived there so peacefully, so delightfully, and so completely heart to heart. I have never been so happy before in

my life. I seemed to catch a glimpse of that future which I desire and dream of in the midst of my overwhelming labours; but I would walk to the end of the world to tell you that your letters are to me in absence what you were yourself in Baden—one of those master-pieces of the heart which are never found twice in the life of a human being. Oh, if you only knew how you are blessed, loved, invoked at every moment!

I must leave you now. There are five sheets of the 'Comédie Humaine' to be corrected.

16th.

Dear Countess,—I am hard at work. With the enchanting prospect of the blessed 24th before me, I find it impossible to put two ideas together. I have the oppressive consciousness that I can never achieve a great literary work so long as I do not see daylight in my affairs, and have not entirely paid off my creditors. Worried on one hand by business, and absorbed on the other by a profound, exclusive, and passionate sentiment, I can do nothing; the faculty no longer exists.

This is neither a compliment nor a complaint; it is the fact. To obviate this misfortune, I have decided to let the present volume of 'La Comédie Humaine,' the twelfth, end with

Madame de la Chanterie, which will save my being obliged to write seven other sheets, which would have brought in nine thousand francs. I think of you too constantly to get on with my copy.

I have received the pretty cup, and I intend it shall be made into a miracle of art.

When you receive this letter, say, we are travelling towards each other. Take care of your health; it belongs to your child—I dare not say to me, and yet what else is there in the world so precious to me?

If in this letter I have written anything you do not like, forgive it for the sake of the great haste with which I write. I have only time to close this letter and to say, *à bientôt.*

To Madame Hanska, Naples.

Marseilles: Nov. 12, 1845.

This moment arrived. I have neither my luggage nor my passport, neither have I had my breakfast; but whilst waiting for it, I begin a letter to you, dear Countess, my first and strongest instinct.

Midnight.

Méry has just left me. I gave him tea and a rubber of whist at sixpence a point, which, as you

see, is not ruinous. The history of this day is thus : As soon as I had finished breakfast, I went to bed. I was thoroughly tired out. Méry, to whom I had written a line, came whilst I was asleep, and, finding me in such magnificent repose, had respect for it; but he returned before I had finished dressing. We went to see a dealer in old curiosities, where I saw some really fine objects. I bought a few trifles for myself, which seemed to be *de vraies occasions à saisir*. You know I never buy in any other way. Leaving this place, we went to dinner, and had a good deal of conversation; then we returned here for tea. I lost a hundred pence, and gained the collaboration of Méry for several plays which I have in view.

13th. 9 A.M.

This is only to say, I shall not write again until I reach Passy. You know so well all there is in my heart—in my soul, for you and for your two children, for Georges is in reality an elder son—that there is no need to repeat it. I am still stupid from the effect of the sea. Even whilst writing to you, I have the rolling of the vessel in my head, but you will forgive me, *n'est ce pas?* and to-morrow I put myself into the mail for Paris. I have spent a great deal of money over

and above my new acquisitions; first, on board the vessel the water was too bad to drink, and I was driven to champagne; and it was not possible to drink it all by myself, with the captain and the commissary beside me, both of whom showed me much kindness and attention. I also felt myself obliged to invite both these gentlemen to breakfast at the Hôtel d'Orient: it was an indispensable politeness, and it was also a study for me as author of 'La Comédie Humaine.' Do not cry out upon my dissipation, and do not tell Georges about it; he would think me a Lucullus, and make fun of me. A thousand affectionate homages, a thousand graceful thoughts from my heart to your adorable child and to the excellent Georges. I am going to work hard, that I may be able to rejoin you. Perhaps you may see Méry at Florence; he has agreed to go there along with me. Take great care of yourself, and sometimes remember that at Passy there will be a poor wretch in banishment from his sun. Méry is more *ensorcelé* than ever with his *Anglaise*.

13th. Midnight.

I must confess that I am dead with sleep, for last night I never closed my eyes, owing to the tea which I drank in unlimited quantities yester-

day, and which the stupid German waiter had made of Vesuvian strength. Instead of sleeping, I did nothing but calculate and re-calculate my engagements of all kinds. My projects of acquisition, my house to be built, or to be arranged, Also, my thoughts travelled back to the happiest year in my life, that in which I had been the least separated from you. This sleeplessness was not, as you may see, without its charms.

Before separating yesterday, we played a little Baccarat. I won some money—so much that the journey to Pisa is covered. Méry plays wonderfully, and he grows wittier and pleasanter every day.

To Madame Hanska, Naples.

Passy: November 18, 1845.

Dear Countess,—I arrived yesterday so thoroughly knocked up, that there was nothing for it but to go to bed at once; I only got up for dinner, and returned to my bed immediately after. I was in a fever and felt broken all to pieces. I had gone beyond my strength. At Marseilles, I had always companions, which added much to the fatigue of the journey. Then at Naples, I was, as you know, always going running about, looking about, examining, observing, *and talking!*

so that these three nights in the *malle-poste* without sleep, added to the twelve days on board ship, and to the expeditions at Naples, have conquered my body, strong as it is,—so no more until to-morrow.

19th.

Georges' commissions will be sent to him towards the 15th, by the captain of the *Tancredi*. His cane is ordered, and will soon be ready. My own affairs seem going tolerably well; but I shall not have got them all in order before the end of the year, and so long as there remains a single creditor, it would be imprudent to raise the mask as regards my property.

Chlendowski gives me great uneasiness. I never met with such a stupendous liar as that man is! What you have done for Laurent-Jan for the love of France, I have done for Chlendowski for the love of Poland. Experience, dear Countess, has taught us that it is best to mind our own business: honest people will find that quite enough for them, without trying to mind the business of other people. If Chlendowski were to become a bankrupt, I should stand to lose ten thousand francs; it is enough to make one shiver.

20th.

My fatigue is all gone. I dined yesterday with Madame de Girardin. Gautier was there, and he offered to make arrangements with the *Théâtre de Variétés* for my 'Richard Cœur d'Éponge' (of which as yet the title alone exists). The company of *Les Variétés* is just now the best in Paris.

This morning I propose to go through my accounts with 'La Presse' and the Dujarier affair; I shall begin to-morrow to go through my accounts, if only I can manage to awake and throw off my stupefaction.

21st.

I got up at nine o'clock. I feel like a lump of lead; I make up my arrears of sleep. Alas! my good genius will learn with regret that I am obliged to take an Herculean task on myself; all my papers *must* be put in order, and it is now ten years since I touched them; what a task! I must make a separate packet for each creditor, and must receive an acknowledgment and a receipt in full, under a penalty of being liable to pay the account twice over, or even to pay what I never owed. It will give me an access of fever every day till it is all finished. I am so anxious

to rejoin my dear *troupe* in Italy—not to quit them again, I hope—that it will give me courage to look into all my affairs, the manuscripts, and to finish all the books I have in hand, to settle with editors' debts, and even to achieve the acquisition of a house which shall be worthy of the author of 'La Gr-r-r-rande Comédie Humaine.'

Now I must wish you an abrupt good-day, for I must run about all this day, in order that to-morrow I may be able to begin once more to work at a regular fixed hour. I hope to get up every morning at four o'clock.

Adieu donc.

22nd.

Well, here I am up at four o'clock. I went to bed yesterday at half-past seven o'clock, after dinner. I was so utterly wearied out with all my expeditions, that I fell asleep in a moment. I am a wretch! for it is now three days that I have been intending to thank you for your letter, which had been delayed, but which I found at the post office; it bears the impress like everything you do, of goodness and of wonderful sagacity.

At this moment I am correcting four sheets of 'La Comédie Humaine,' and I am precisely on that passage about the Duke de Nemours, which

has undergone your historical correction. To rest myself a little, I have been reading again the letter you wrote from Heidelberg, and I am more charmed with it than ever. I will tell you why another time.

23rd.

I have worked hard all day; Chlendowski must be assisted.

25th.

Yesterday I was running all day; twenty-five francs in coach-hire. I went to my sister, to Girardin, to the 'Presse.' My account is settled. Girardin takes 'Les Petites Misères,' so they will have to be finished. I went to the printing office of Plon; I saw A. de B——, about Chlendowski. I am this morning expecting that same Chlendowski, who is to tell me how he really stands; after that, I must again go out to M. Gavault, to look through his account and to know what he has paid. All this is no proof of activity, it is simply to become a wheel in a machine.

26th.

To-day I have received your first letter from Naples; by this time you will have received my letter from Marseilles. With what delight I have contemplated your dear hand-writing!—it is like

seeing you yourself. I felt, as I read it, that there is nothing in the world I would not do to be worthy of so divine a creature, for is she not to me—sister, friend, and queen in one?

Yesterday Chlendowski came, and I spoke to him with severity and dignity, and told him the conditions on which alone I could assist him. This man took me by the arm, and kissed it humbly in the Polish fashion. I must now go to consult Gavault about the act of indemnity; and to dine with Émile de Girardin, who is anxious to know whether 'Les Petites Misères' are in a condition for publication, so I must work at them.

27th.

No news of my acquisitions from Amsterdam, but a letter from a shipbuilder of Havre, desiring an interview. I wrote to M. Périollas, telling him to inquire about my packages, and about the shipbuilder; his reply is just now come. He can tell me nothing about my goods; but the shipbuilder is an adoring admirer of my works, and is now building a vessel, which he desires permission to call 'Le Balzac;' so, dear Countess, your servant is about to be carved on the prow of a ship, and will show his great round face to all nations. What do you say to this?

I have just heard very sad and strange news —Harel is insane, and Karr also! I would rather not believe it.

28th.

A letter from Lirette, inviting me to be present at the ceremony of her taking the veil. This letter has delayed my writing to you, for I wished you to know about this. I live in a whirlwind of goings hither and thither.

30th.

Ma foi! I have slept at my ease! It is half-past ten, I have just finished breakfast, and I rest myself by writing to you. I have only to revise 'Les Petites Misères,' and Théophile Gautier has undertaken to write a few lines by way of introduction. In the interval between two proofs, Plon came to talk over the affair of the Parc Monceau. I may perhaps undertake it as an investment, but without building upon it. The King has granted a six months' delay to Plon. So, you see, it will be for my advantage to wait for events, without being in too great a hurry.

Dec. 1.

I have your letter, your second letter, which is a miracle of style, thought, and erudition. Your account of the expedition to Pompeii is a real gem.

Ah, dear Countess, when you tell me of your accident, I am furious at myself, for ought I not to be always and everywhere your Providence in a small way, for all the infinitely little details of life. I devoured your letter, and placed it in the casket you know of, for I had to hasten off.

Acts of guarantee of assignment are worthless unless they are registered, and the deed of Chlendowski must be registered to-day at latest. In ten days hence I shall owe him nothing; and when I have once closed accounts with him, I will never see him again in my life. He has been my evil genius, my nightmare; he deprived me of eight days of happiness and liberty, which I might have had at Naples.

Ah! how rested I feel from all my fatigues! they are more than made up to me by the charm of reading in your letter the account of what you are doing, the description of the place from which you wrote to me. I can see your arm-chair by the window, those hideous portraits, the carpet, the casement and the Villa Reale. . . .

This letter has been delayed on account of Georges' walking-stick. But that hard-hearted Froment has not finished it!

He has had an order for a table, worth thirty thousand francs, to be made for Son Altesse Royale

Mademoiselle, and I found him this morning in an ecstasy before his work, which is very beautiful, but then there was no walking-stick!

December 3.

I could not write to you yesterday. I had a great many proofs, both for 'La Presse,' which wants to have the whole of 'Les Petites Misères' at once, and for 'La Comédie Humaine' also. I rose at half-past two in the morning and worked until noon. I had scarcely time to breakfast, and reached the convent by one o'clock. Those good nuns seem to think the world only turns round for their benefit. I asked the portress how long the ceremony would last; she replied 'about an hour.' Well, it lasted till four o'clock! I could not well go away afterwards without seeing the poor girl; so it was half-past five before I could leave. I did not get away from the office of 'La Presse' till half-past seven. I dined at nine, and now here I am getting up at eight o'clock instead of at two. I am not vexed with poor Lirette. It was imperative that her dear Countess and her Anna should be represented at the *enterrement* of their friend; so I took my part bravely. They gave me an excellent place, beside the officiating priest. There was a sermon that lasted about an

hour, very well written, very well delivered, not very forcible, but full of faith. The officiating priest fell asleep ; he is an old man. Lirette never moved, she was kneeling between two of the sisters. They listened to the sermon on their knees. She never raised her eyes. Her face was white, pure, and impressed with the exaltation of a saint. As I had never before seen the veil taken, I looked at everything, observed closely, with an attention which no doubt would be credited as an act of piety. On entering the chapel, I prayed for you and for your children from my heart. Whenever I see an altar my thoughts ascend, and I venture humbly and ardently to commend to His goodness myself, and those who belong to me (that is, you and yours). This chapel, with its altar in white and gold, looks *très coquette* ; it is 'Visitandine' of Gresset.

The ceremony was on the whole imposing and very dramatic. I was much affected when the *three* novices flung themselves upon the ground, and were buried by those around under a black pall, and the prayers for the dead were recited for these three living creatures ; and after that one saw them rise up and appear as brides crowned with white roses, I was, I confess, most deeply moved. After the ceremony I saw Lirette ;

she was as gay as a bird. 'Vous voilà devenu Madame,' said I, smiling. She said she had prayed much for us all: and that she felt so happy, that she prayed to God incessantly that we might all become monks and nuns! At the last we spoke earnestly about you, and about your dear child, &c.

Dear Countess, I do hope that you will see in all this a proof of infinite affection, for I was overwhelmed with work and matters of business. Besides, Lirette had written, 'I am sure you will let nothing hinder you from being present.' I knew too well all the meaning she attached to this not to determine she should be correct.

I was very happy there, for, my prayers once over, I thought of you alone. To think of you is at once my life and my religion. I feel and know too well that if your glorious friendship for me should ever cease, I should at once lose all consciousness of myself; I should become mad, or else I should die. Oh! I entreat you most earnestly to take care of yourself.

4th.

I see with deep regret that most probably I shall have to make the sacrifice of Rome and of Florence to work and business, for, as you say,

my hope of repose and the security of all my future prospects is at stake. I shall try to go to Rome for the Holy Week; for, by that time I shall be so worn out with work, that some recreation will be really necessary, but if by giving up this happiness I could earn your *satisfecit*, and what you call 'a position worthy of me,' I would not hesitate. Do you now at last approve a little of my conduct? Do not be angry with me for the delay in this letter. I have only been back eighteen days; and I can only send my packet every ten days, that is, three letters a month.

To the Countess Hanska, Naples.

Paris: December 15.

Dear Countess,—I am attacked by the same nostalgia which I had before I went to Chalons. It is very difficult for me to write; my thoughts are not free; they no longer belong to me, and I do not think I shall recover my faculties under perhaps eighteen months. You will have to resign yourself, to keep me near you. Since I left Dresden I have done nothing. The commencement of 'Les Paysans,' and the end of 'Béatrix,' have been my last efforts; since then everything has been impossible. All day yesterday I felt a sombre

and deep depression, which was frightful. Nevertheless, the six sheets of 'La Comédie Humaine' must be finished . . . I am going to see whether the *parure* of coral is yet put in its case. I am going to ask whether Georges' walking-stick is finished. I am full of finding a book-case to match with my two Florentine pieces of furniture, for a magnificent room with hangings of golden yellow silk, with black ornaments, green, and gold, and black carved wood; I am quite taken up with this. So of literature, of work, there is little or nothing. . . .

It is very likely that when I have once finished with my six sheets of 'La Comédie Humaine,' I shall come on to Naples; it is the only chance of forcing myself to finish them. What could I not make myself do, with the hope of this great joy before me, if it were only for eight days even? I say to myself that there are a thousand reasons why I must see you, consult you; that, in fact, I can accomplish nothing without you; my intellect is an accomplice with my heart and desire. Until that comes to pass, I do not complain, I remain dull and depressed. I am like a Breton conscript—*regrettant sa chère galette et sa Bretagne.*

December 14.

Yesterday, dear Countess, I went over the Conciergerie in detail. I saw the dungeon of the Queen and that of Madame Elizabeth; it is frightful! I saw everything thoroughly, it took up the whole of my morning, and left me no time to go to the Rue Dauphine about Georges' commissions. When I was near the Cour d'Assises, I found that the trial of Madame Colomés was going on. She is the niece of the Maréchal Sébastiani, a woman of about forty-five. I wished to see her. Well, I found on the bench of the Cour d'Assises the living likeness of Madame de Berny; it was enough to terrify one. She was infatuated with a young man, and in order to obtain money to give him, which he squandered amongst the actresses of La Porte-St.-Martin, she fabricated false cheques, and negotiated bills signed with imaginary names . . . She persisted in taking the whole blame of everything upon herself (he has absconded), and she would not permit her counsel to impute anything to him.

I had never heard a case pleaded, so I remained to hear Crémieux, who spoke most eloquently, I can tell you. He told me afterwards that she used to say to her lover: 'I only ask you to deceive me so completely that I may

be able to believe myself beloved.' I was so much interested that I remained sitting on the bench of the Cour d'Assises, by the side of this unhappy woman, until it was half-past four o'clock. She has been very beautiful, and she wept like a Magdalen; from time to time I heard her sigh: *Aye! Aye! Aye!* in three heart-rending tones.

M. Lebel, the governor of the Conciergerie, who for the last fifteen years has shut the doors upon all manner of crimes, is, I am credibly told, the great-grandson of the Lebel who used to open the doors of Louis XV. to all the beauties of the Parc aux Cerfs. There are these vicissitudes and remarkable analogies in obscure families as well as in the most august. The heir of Maître Lebel, the successor of so many *pompes royales*, when he went to his death could only leave to one of his faithful friends, as a *souvenir* and a reward, a worn-out cravat and an old prayer-book! When you come to Paris you must certainly go to see this place: it is curious, and takes hold of one's imagination, and it is utterly unknown. Now I shall be able to do my work.[1]

Yesterday I had some distraction from my *nostalgie* with the Conciergerie and the Cour

[1] *La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin.*

d'Assises, and to-day I am throwing myself into my work like a madman . . . Ah! you do not know that I am quietly amassing a collection of splendid art furniture, by dint of researches and of expeditions on foot through Paris, of self-denials and savings. I keep silent on the matter. I shall not unmask my batteries until my dream shall seem to promise more and more the semblance of reality.

15th.

Behold me fairly started on my labours. This night I have completed six pages of the six sheets which have to be written; I who know what I am saying tell you that this is a great deal. Yesterday after working hours, I went to see my sister who had written to tell me her eldest daughter was dying. Sophie, however, had only a slight congestion of the head, which a refreshing drink happily cured.

I am endeavouring by some means to retrieve the disaster of Les Jardies; but work is the great thing towards it.

Adieu for to-day. Does Georges take good care of you both? If the smallest ill occurs to you under his auspices, I will crush his box of insects in the steamboat. I bless you every day

of my life, and I return thanks to God for your precious affection.

16th.

Yesterday, at four o'clock, I received your No. 4. I see you are still anxious at not hearing from me; but you forget one thing, which is, that you began to write to me whilst I was travelling, and of necessity it took some time before any kind of regularity in the service could be established. . . There were five days at sea, three days at Marseilles, three days of the *malle-poste*, and the first week during which I wrote to you from Paris, which accounts for the fourteen days' difference between us. Thus, dear Countess, you see the delay is due to *force majeure*. You see I am not to blame, and that I have written to you every day; too much, indeed, for I have done nothing else but think of you, and it is very little I have written for posterity; now, not to write, is to retard my liberation. Your letters give me life! I am an idolator of the dear paper on which they are written; I am a real child in that respect; your punctuality delights me. Do not think me unmindful of so much goodness. I entreat you to take care of yourself. . . .

The deplorable thing is, that work now begins

to fatigue me. The symptoms which the happiness and travel of this year had dispersed have begun to show themselves again. My eyes throb and my temples also; I have been obliged to set up a flambeau to hold five wax-lights, the three were not sufficient. My eyes suffered; and the ugly little copper flambeau, with all the gilding rubbed off, which you may have remarked in my room, is now replaced by a flambeau worthy of a Minister, of an untold magnificence, in bronze, chiselled, and gilded; but the cost of wax-lights every night to burn in it, is one franc fifty centimes, do you understand, dear Madame? Now, two francs for fire, and fifty centimes for coffee over and above, amounts to four francs a night.

Behold the dreams of the 'Arabian Nights' at a very cheap rate! . . . . I have not yet got your fantastic *parure*, but I hope to receive it shortly.

Froment Meurice intends to distinguish himself so remarkably in the matter of Georges' walking-stick, that I do not know whether it will be ready even for New Year's Day. He is a great artist.

I assure you it is enough to frighten one, to think of all the talent and genius there is in Paris.

To M. Méry, Marseilles.

Paris: 1845.

My good and dear De Méry,—I thank you a thousand times for all the trouble you have so kindly taken. Some day I will write the true history of the interviews between a poet and a Sieur Lazard, a dealer in antiques and objects of art.

I lose no time in telling you that the Lazards, husband and wife, offered me, at the very first, that mirror for eight hundred francs, and *l'enfant indécent* for five hundred, which makes thirteen hundred for the two; now, it is no reduction at all to offer to take off three hundred francs. I beg you to let Lazard see that you will give him one thousand francs. If he will not yield, then keep your nine hundred francs, look stoically at the things, and *blaguez beaucoup Lazard.* You know that the child is made of bronze, and the glass of lead, so neither of them will fly away. Do not give in one hair's-breadth; and before you have done, I shall have taught you how to manage dealers in *bric-à-brac.*

Whilst you are going through the process of talking over the worthy Lazard, do me the favour to send friends of your own from time to time, to bargain for these two objects, and let them offer,

some of them fifty, some a hundred, and some a hundred and twenty francs *less* than you have offered. After a fortnight of this discipline, Lazard will, one fine day, let you have them at your own price. If Lazard does not give in yet, he will do so by the time I come to Marseilles. I am expecting a letter which will, perhaps, permit me to go to Florence. Who knows whether we may not go there together? I will take care of you on board the steamer. Prose will be at the feet of poetry. Is your novel for 'La Presse' in as forward a state as mine? There are not yet two whole lines written. O lansquenet!

P.S. Never become a collector, one becomes possessed by a demon as jealous and as exacting as gambling. *Addio caro!*

To Madame Hanska, Naples.

December 20, 1845.

A dreadful misfortune has happened: the river Doubs has overflowed beyond all former floods, and the bridge which my brother-in-law was building has been carried away. I am going to my sister. I still continue to be good-for-nothing. I read the 'Trois Mousquetaires,' and I go on with my cold. At my sister's I found desolation, her daughter was ill. I stayed all day trying to

cheer them up. My brother-in-law, having two bridges to build this year, goes away to Spain with M. de P——, who, it seems to me, is a man seeking a fortune upon the hope of having a railway to make in Spain.

My sister confessed it was she who persuaded her husband to undertake this journey. The unlucky man writes to her that Spain is costing him dear, for if he had superintended his bridge on the Doubs himself, the bridge would have been finished, delivered up, and this accident, from *force majeure*, would have concerned the authorities alone. Adieu! *pour aujourd'hui.* I go back to the 'Trois Mousquetaires.'

21st.

I can understand, dear Countess, that you must have been shocked by the 'Mousquetaires,' you who are so well informed, and especially well-read in the history of France, knowing it not only in its official aspect, but in all the small details of the private life of the King and the little suppers of the Queen. One really feels vexed with oneself for having read it; nothing remains but the annoyance of having frittered away one's time, the precious stuff of which life is made. It is not thus when one comes to the last page but one of Walter Scott's novels, and it is not the remembrance left.

One can read Walter Scott again; but I do not think one could read Dumas twice. He is a delightful story-teller; but he ought either to renounce history, or to study it more and try to know a little more about it.

I am so unhappy to be at Passy when you are at Naples. I am half-stupid, for I have been crying like a child.

Adieu for to-day; if I listened to myself, I should write to you till to-morrow. My head is turned with regrets and vain longings. I implore for the power of working, that I may not go mad.

Monday, 22nd.

I dined yesterday with Madame de Girardin. There was some excellent music played by Mademoiselle Delarue, the daughter of the old fellow you knew at Vienna. Gautier was there, he made me promise to come and take *haschich* with him this evening at the Hôtel Pimodan.

I am just going out upon all sorts of tiresome business.

Tuesday, 23rd; 4 o'clock.

I resisted the *haschich*; at least, I did not experience any of the phenomena which had been described to me. My brain is so solid, it seems the dose should have been stronger. However, I heard celestial voices, and I saw divine pictures;

then during twenty years I went down the staircase of Lauzun; I saw the gilding and paintings of the *Salon* in fairy splendour.

But this morning, since I got up, I have been continually falling asleep, and I am without either will or strength.[1]

Thursday, 25th.

Yesterday I slept all day; and to-morrow I go to Rouen to see some ebony panels, said to be going for nothing. I cannot work.

Saturday, 27th.

I left Passy yesterday morning at six o'clock, at seven I was at the railway, and at eleven at Rouen. It was the same journey I took with you and Anna. I need not say I thought of you both all day. I went back in thought to that day when we saw Rouen; it was a *fête* I gave myself. I was happy—oh, I was very happy. I remembered that wretch of a pastry-cook, and from Rouen to Mantes I recalled all my atrocious sufferings, and how I thought I was poisoned!

At Rouen I found the remains of a royal suite of furniture, and I got all the pieces for eighty francs; that was a bargain. It is true, it will cost

[1] Théophile Gautier has described this evening (see the *Portraits et Souvenirs littéraires*, notice on Baudelaire, 1875).

a good deal to repair, and to arrange; this somewhat terrifies me; nevertheless, I shall send it to a cabinet-maker, so that the remorse may be complete. Another less pleasing result is that, not having eaten anything from morning till night, I have gained a dreadful headache.

My incapacity for work makes me very unhappy. Wednesday, the last day of the year, I am to dine with Madame de Girardin, so that I may arrange with Nestor Roqueplan for the 'Variétés.' I shall then begin to work in earnest on 'Richard Cœur d'Éponge.'

I tell you all this that you may know what I am doing or intend to do. You will receive this letter on your first of January, that is to say, on the sixth, your Birthday.

God grant that in this coming year of 1846 we may not be separated for a moment; that you may lay down the burden of your responsibilities, and that not one of them may remain! These are the wishes to which I give utterance; there is another which I keep to myself.

To Madame Hanska, Dresden.

Passy: January 4, 1846.

Another year, dearest; I accept it with delight, for these years—these thirteen years—

which will be completed in February, since the day—the thousand times blessed day!—when I received that admirable letter, constellated with hope and happiness, seem to me so many eternal and indestructible links between us. The fourteenth year will commence in two months; and each day in all these years has added to my admiration, and to my dog-like fidelity.

I dined, as I told you, with Nestor Roqueplan the last Wednesday in December, and the last day of the month, at the house of the illustrious Delphine. We laughed as much as I can laugh away and far from you. Delphine is certainly the queen of conversation; on this evening she was peculiarly sublime, sparkling, and charming. Gautier was there also. I went away after a long talk with him. I was assured there is no hurry about 'Richard Cœur d'Éponge,' the theatre being more than supplied with plays. Perhaps Gautier and I may do the piece between us some time hence.

Such is the history of this dinner, which was your due. On my return home, I saw two or three tiresome people, which greatly fatigued me. You will not believe it; you seem wilfully ignorant that I only desire to have your companionship, and to see no one in the world, except yourself. But,

dear Countess, there is one thing I am very sorry to say: it is, that I do not write a single line, and I groan.

January 5, Midnight.

Something very strange has occurred. I received this morning your long letter, a day after that from your child. It is a mystery. Both came *viâ* Marseilles. Oh, *chère*, what a day I have had!—atrocious, hideous, frightful! Figure to yourself that I had business to transact. I had to see Froment Meurice; M. Gavault, a ship-builder, who, for some reason I cannot imagine, persists in calling a vessel he is building by my name; to go to several newspaper offices, especially to 'La Presse,' &c. After breakfast, at twelve o'clock, I went to the post and received a good large letter, very heavy. My heart bounded ready to break with delight. No, I was happy, and so happy that in the coach, on the road between Passy and Paris, I opened the letter—the thousandfold blessed letter!—and I read—I read. I came at last to the sheet which had been inspired by the strange and inconceivable conduct of Madame A—— with Koref, and after reading your scathing observations, I remained overwhelmed. I closed the letter, and put it into my side pocket. At first, I might have been seen shedding tears;

then I was weighed down by a sadness, of which the following were the practical consequences. The pavement of Paris was yesterday two inches deep in snow. I wore a summer *chaussure*, but I was so miserable that I felt stifled in my hackney coach. I needed air. I got out in the Rue Rivoli, and I walked, and walked, my feet in this muddy snow, the whole length of Paris, through an immense crowd, without seeing anybody, amongst carriages and horses without being aware of them. I went on, on, with my countenance all changed and disordered like a fool. People turned to stare at me. In short, I walked from the Rue Rivoli to beyond the Hôtel de Ville, through the most crowded streets, without perceiving the crowd, the cold, or anything. If any one had asked me, What is the time? What sort of weather? What season of the year? What town is this? Where are you? I could not have answered a word. I was dazed with grief. Sensibility is the life-blood of the soul, and it poured in torrents through my wound; and this is what I kept saying to myself: 'I have never in my life been guilty of a word of indiscretion, and now, even if I were not loyal, there are reasons for my silence under the circumstances in question which would make me so: 1st, Honour and probity; 2nd,

The certainty that I should injure the object of my hopes; 3rd, The certainty that the arrangement of my affairs would thereby be rendered impossible; and, lastly, my complete uncertainty as regards the result of my hopes and desires.' And here am I, accused of ignoble gossiping—I, whose conduct is so clear of that reproach!

To suffer this injustice at your hands, even though it was involuntary, broke me down completely. I felt as though my head were struck with a club at each step I took. This Koref is an infamous spy—a well-known Austrian spy. I no longer recognise him, and scarcely reply if he addresses me. Madame A—— is not aware of this, and she speaks of your interests, as well as of my affairs, to the most dangerous man I know. It is really incredible! Koref, moreover, is intimate with a very wicked woman, a Madame de B——, who invents lying gossip, and who spies like a spy—that is to say, outside her political calling—and only to keep her hand in practice. Who knows if these people may not make these things the subject of a report? Who can tell if Koref, too well known to the Austrian police, may not have profited by the absurd confidences of this stupid Madame A——, to enter the pay of a second Northern Power?

Ah! this Madame A—— has done me incalculable mischief! And I, who already had been a sufferer in pecuniary matters, through the false reports set afloat at Baden, to have, thanks to that woman, all this suffering added. Thinking thus, I walked on, seeing nothing before me but trouble and confusion. Koref, whom I have not seen for eighteen months, to whom for the last three years I have not addressed a word, and for him to call himself my friend! It is too impudent! I went on, my heart bleeding, my feet in the ruins I was forecasting, and thinking always of the pitiless reflections which that fatal letter of Madame A—— had suggested to you. At four o'clock I reached the house of Froment Meurice, where I found neither *parure* nor bracelet, nor anything else ready, not even my seal ('Fulge vivam'), which I have been waiting for so long.

I went on to Gavault, on foot from the Hôtel de Ville to the Madeleine. Gavault was frightened at my appearance; he saw me without soul, without strength, without life. From there I walked all the way to Passy, where I arrived at eight o'clock without any sense of bodily fatigue; the broken soul crushed the body; moral exhaustion killed bodily fatigue. At ten o'clock I went to bed, sleep was impossible; at eleven o'clock I

arose and lighted my candles and my fire; I took some coffee, and now I have just finished reading your letter; the balm contained in the latter sheets has calmed me, but the effects of my late suffering have not yet ceased. I leave off until to-morrow; bodily fatigue is asserting itself, and I sleep. I am going to bed, it is one o'clock.

6th.

Dear Countess, to-day being your Birthday, I wish only to express thoughts of gentleness and peace.

I went to bed at half-past one, and fell asleep thinking of the charming things at the end of your letter. I had no dreams; the moral and physical fatigue of yesterday was such that I slept till ten o'clock. I have just breakfasted, and now take up your letter again; its painful part does not come from you, but from the foolish letter of Madame A——. You could not think otherwise than you did when you read it. By a whimsical fatality, I read your letter at two separate periods, and I suffered for my fault. I might have taken a *fiacre*, and there finished reading it; but deep and violent feelings never calculate, they precipitate themselves like torrents or claps of thunder. What also tended to upset

me was, that I saw an attempt was being made to prejudice you against me.

I have no wish to go into the world; on the contrary, I have a horror of it; celebrity is irksome. I long for a home; I thirst to drink long draughts of the happiness of a life in common between two. I have no affection whatever which would in any way interfere with the love I bear in my soul, and which is indeed the very life of this soul. 'Le reste n'est qu'un vain songe.'

But let us cease to trouble ourselves about bad people and evil tongues; say to yourself, the world is made up of felons who detest respectable people, and of those who hate the happiness they cannot find.

Adieu! then, my dear, I am going to work furiously. I shall start on April 1 for Civita Vecchia. As Easter falls on April 12, I shall be ten days in Rome, and then I return, with you, through Switzerland; such is my plan. When I think that, after leaving Baden, you must return home, a terrible shudder seizes me. People know when they re-enter Russia, but not when they may leave it again. But I do not like to finish in sadness. My heart blesses you; as to my mind, you know it is but the reflection and echo of your own.

To M. A. Colomb, Paris.

Paris: January 30, 1846.

Sir,—Pray excuse the delay of this answer to your letter of November 1845. Your letter came while I was at Naples, and got mixed up with accumulated papers on my table, and being inside your pamphlet on 'The Life of Beyle,' I did not see it till I read your notice; a life so busy as mine has its chances and turns. If you consider that I have no one to aid me, neither secretary nor helper, you will understand why I answer a letter of November last on January 30.

What I wrote on 'Beyle' was done with too much disinterestedness for you not to feel that you were free to use it as you please; the one condition I make is, that I shall have a copy of his works, which I greatly admire.[1]

He was one of the most remarkable minds of the day, but he was not sufficiently careful in style; he wrote as birds sing, and our language is like Madame Honesta, who finds nothing good, unless it is also irreproachable in finish and polish.

I am exceedingly grieved we have lost him. We ought to have used the pruning-knife in the

[1] M. A. Colomb, the executor of Henri Beyle, wished to reprint at the end of the *Chartreuse de Parme* the article written by Balzac on Beyle in the *Revue Parisienne.*

'Chartreuse de Parme;' a second edition would have made it an irreproachable and complete work. It will always be a marvellous book, a book for minds of distinction.

Pray continue the work you have begun; be faithful to the friend who is no more. I am happy to contribute the widow's mite to the work.

Accept the expression of my most distinguished consideration.

To Madame Hanska, Naples.

Passy: February 8, 1846.

What happiness! I have your letter at last. I ought to write on my knees for such perseverance and goodness.

Do not venture to Rome until Georges is perfectly well; Roman sight-seeing would kill him! Rome will not tumble down yet, and health may be lost there in a week. Wait! wait!

When you receive this letter the 'Comédie Humaine' will be finished.

I saw at a *marchand de bric-à-brac* the miniature of Madame de Sévigné, done in her time, as it seemed to me. One might get it for very little. Would you like to have it? it seemed pretty good, but I must say I hardly looked at it, I was in such a hurry.

Tuesday, 10th.

I have seen the miniature again; it is frightful! I am buying, instead, the portrait of the Queen Marie Leczinska, after Coypel, evidently done in his studio. I bought it for the price of the frame; and as it is a portrait such as queens used to give to towns or great personages, even though it be a copy, it may still ornament a drawing-room. I begged Gautier to bring me a painter named Chenevard, a friend of La Belgiojoso, to enlighten me on the value of the picture of Queen Marie; for, like Louis XIV., 'Je ne veux pas me tromper.'

Wednesday, 14th.

Many journeys, much fatigue, with no result. M. F—— has fallen dangerously ill, and that retards my business.

Do you see, dear Countess, that in the matter of this liquidation I am not my own master; the least apparent anxiety would result in a failure. One must wait and watch like the hunter when he is on the trail. It is a frightful state of things; the harassing of my business matters, added to those of my soul (which is devoured by absence, as some are said to be by remorse), have a powerful influence upon my poor brain.

I can assure you, without vanity, that I am irreproachable; I rise every night. I think of you. I write to you; and I go on thus for two hours, before I can set to my work. I continue to write, but it is to you, and not, as I ought to write, to the public; or if, by a wonderful chance, I should not think of you, then it is about one of the houses which are offered to me, about the furniture, about its arrangement, about the thousand details of my affairs, for each affair of a thousand francs requires as much care and trouble as if it were a matter of a hundred thousand. Then I read over again your dear letters, I gaze upon my proofs and admonish myself. Day breaks, and I have done nothing. I tell myself that I am a monster, that to become really worthy of you I ought to forget you and gird myself with the girdle of a worker. I say a thousand bitter things to myself, and I take up the ivory of Daffinger. I fancy it is you who are there, and I dream, and I awake in despair to find that I have been dreaming, instead of working.

Madame de Girardin asks me to come to her; a lady, daughter or grand-daughter of Sheridan, 'qui se môray de voâre moâ.' I am going in my grand costume of high manners.

Thursday, 12th.

I went to bed this morning, all my hours disarranged! All for a rasping Englishwoman, who stared at me through her eyeglass, as she would stare at an actor! Madame de Girardin, charming in a small circle, is, it must be confessed, a less agreeable hostess when it is a large reception. It is only by her talent that she shows herself superior to her origin; when she travels out of her talent she becomes once more her mother's daughter, *bourgeoise* and Gay, *pur sang*. The Duc de Guiche, *qui s'est rallié*, was there, the great man of the evening; he was almost witty, which I had never believed him to be. Admiral de la Susse told me that Baden society was *désolée* because I had refused all invitations, and would not quit a certain family which had confiscated me for their own benefit! From this moment I fell into a state of wonderful stupidity. Madame de Girardin whispered, 'What is the matter this evening?' I answered, 'The Englishwoman has struck me to the heart.' . . . She laughed, and I kept possession of my melancholy. I retraced in my thoughts the landscape of Baden, the Hôtel de Cerf, the walks, everything. Oh! how completely you absorb me! It is not to be expressed; a word, a nothing, everything carries me back to you.

Dear Countess, poor Georges must be consoled! I will look for the Dejean Catalogue: it is very scarce; it was burnt in the same fire in the Rue Pot de Fer, which destroyed the 'Contes drôlatiques.' This catalogue can now only be found at sales; but I will get it, one way or another. I have, moreover, been able to find a work of which you will see the title in the envelope of this letter. Write and tell me if Georges knows it. It is the most beautiful Iconography of Coleopteræ in existence. Only seven copies remain, the plates were destroyed. If he would like to have it, I will bring it the next time I come, along with his insects and his Dejean.

Prowling about last Saturday, I found two Sèvres vases (of the Restoration), on which are painted, for some entomologist, no doubt, the prettiest insects in the world. It is a piece of really artistic work, and must have cost a great deal. Georges will be pleased to see them. I will give him painted jars in return for painted jars. These two vases may have been offered to Latreille; such a conscientious piece of work could only have been intended for some great celebrity in entomology. It is a real *trouvaille.* No one knows what Paris can supply! With time and patience, everything can be found there, even

cheap bargains. At this moment, I am bargaining for a chandelier, which must have belonged to some Emperor of Germany; it is surmounted by the double-headed Imperial eagle. It is a Flemish chandelier, which must have come from Brussels before the Revolution; it is all copper, and weighs two hundred pounds. The copper is worth two francs fifty centimes the kilo.; I shall get the chandelier at its intrinsic value, viz., four hundred and fifty francs. I intend it for my dining-room, which is to be in the same style. I can see your affright at these communications; but set your mind at rest, no debts are incurred; your supreme orders are obeyed. Lirette will be paid according to your intentions, and Froment Meurice the same; as to my personal affairs, there is more money than will be wanted for the liquidation.

I am working for the 'Musée des Familles,' whilst the 'Comédie Humaine' is drawing to a close. I shall come to you with the entomological vases, the Iconography (if it is to be had), the insects, the Dejean Catalogue, and Georges' cane. You see that my life, my enjoyment, my happiness consists in whatever I can find to do for my beloved *troupe*.

Froment Meurice is really an impossible jeweller! Here we are at February 17, and the

figure of Nature not yet finished! He says it is still in the hands of the carver. He is altogether absorbed by a toilette for the Duchess of Lucca.

Tuesday, 17th.

I can only bid you a hasty good morning; some persons are coming to breakfast. Amongst others, Chenevard, with whom I am going to see the portrait of Queen Marie Leczinska, and I shall not return till late.

Wednesday, 18th.

Ah! I have at last received your letter, saying that Georges is getting rapidly better, and has been to see you at Villa Reale. This good letter shows that peacefulness and calm have returned to your heart, since you have resumed your habit of writing every evening, when your friendship enters the lists against sleep, which is often vanquished for my benefit. It is strange that the long letter I am now about to take to the post replies to many of the questions you have asked in yours. This correspondence between us touches me to the heart. How much I love your letters! how true they are! When I read them I seem to hear you speak; they are a balm for all my wounds. I entreat you, do not go to Rome.

The journey, I repeat, might be fatal to Georges, who is very delicate. I was the same at his age, but I thought little of it, and others troubled themselves still less.

I do not work so much as I ought. You are quite right to tell me of it; I reproach myself much more severely. 'The days pass over,' as you say; but you do not know the chaos through which my liquidation carries me, and you cannot understand the incessant journeyings to and fro, which so often hinder me; very often it is only a matter of a hundred francs. My tranquillity signifies ownership, removal, self-debate. I tell you, moreover, even if it should bring down upon me your blame (which to me is a terrible thing), that the business of my liquidation comes before my literary labour.

I am glad the engraving and device of your armed knight has pleased you. Believe me, no one helped your servant; the Latin is my own. 'Virens sequar,' and 'Fulge vivam,' are worthy of the E written in the star.

I have now the portrait of Queen Marie! It is not a Coypel, but was painted in his studio by a pupil; whether by Lancret or by another, it is a choice picture, and one must be a connoisseur not to believe it a Coypel. Moreover, the por-

trait has been engraved, and Chenevard declares I shall never lose by it.

Ah! I have come across Koref, who had the impudence to tell me that he had had much conversation about me with one of your friends, and that he had spoken most highly of me. I would have liked you to have seen the way in which I looked at Koref, saying, 'Je n'en doute pas.' He quitted me abruptly. *Allons!*—I must have the strength to finish this letter; tell me where to address you, where to look for you, where to find you? Will it be Florence or Rome? do not delay to tell me. A thousand submissions and adorations.

To Madame Hanska, Naples.

Paris: March 1846.

Dear Countess,—The director of mails has taken my place to Lyons, as the Marseilles service has so many letters to carry that simple literature, personified in me, is turned out of the coach to make room inside for taxed letters.

Now, the best thing you can do, is to stay at Rome, and not to pursue your intended journey until you receive good news. It is said your provinces are in a state of very disquieting fermentation. I have even heard that there is a

general rising. A hundred and eleven nobles and proprietors of Gallicia have been massacred by their peasants, whom they wished to drag into insurrection against their sovereign, the Emperor of Austria. At present the Austrians are, officially, said to be retreating. You will see this in the 'Débats.' The revolt or insurrection has been simultaneous throughout old Poland (Prussian, Austrian, and Russian); the movement is Communistic. I tremble for your Cousin L——. I am told the insurgents are occupying Podhorce. It is truly dreadful, no quarter is given on either side; priests, women, children, old men, all have risen. Bands of ten thousand Poles from Russian Poland, dying of hunger, have thrown themselves into Prussia (where scarcity is beginning); the Prussians repel them by cordons of troops, as if they were pestilence-stricken. Everyone here foresees nothing but misfortune for this wretched nation. People are astonished that Galicia, apparently so well governed, and seemingly so contented under the sceptre of Austria, should rise at such an ill-chosen moment. Chlopiçki was asked to be at the head of the movement; but he refused, and retired to Prussia, saying he would rather blow out his brains than lend himself to such folly. It is believed that Lithuania and the provinces west of

Russia are inclined to rise in consequence of the conscription for the Caucasus.

What disasters may not be in store for Europe with these populations in a state of chronic madness! Can the rulers of these countries, who seem to be already exhausted, can they repress these people and keep them quiet? How providential that you are at Rome!—you who are so wise and intelligent, you have so many enemies and ill-wishers round you in your own land! Besides, there is no saying what might happen if you found yourself between the insurgents and the troops.

'The Gazette de Cologne,' under Prussian censorship, publishes an article on the blindness of rulers with regard to Poland; it remarks that 'nationalities never perish.' (Do not speak of this to anyone.) I hope nothing unpleasant will happen to the Countess Mniszech; Georges must be very anxious about his mother, as a rising of the whole of Galicia is feared. Hungary also, so faithful up to this moment, is said to be in arms.

You cannot imagine how happy I am since my place to Lyons was secured, and all my last preparations made.

Sans adieu, à bientôt!

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

(From Rome, the Eternal City, before my departure.) 1846.

My dear Laura,—I feel beforehand the pleasure you will have when thinking that your brother is 'putting pen to paper,' in the city of the Cæsars, the Popes, and others.

Write you a description! I cannot! Read Lamennais's 'Affaires de Rome' again, and you will know nearly as much as he or I. I have been received with distinction by our Holy Father. You will tell my mother that, while prostrating myself at the feet of the common Father of the Faithful, whose hierarchical slipper I kissed in company with a *podestat d'Avignon* (a dreadful mayor from a commune of Vaucluse), I thought of her, and I bring her a little rosary invented by Leo XII., much shorter to recite than the old one, called 'La Corona.' It has been blessed by his Holiness. I have seen all Rome from A to Z.

The illumination of the dome of St. Peter's on Easter Day is alone worth the journey, though as much may be said of the Benediction *urbi et orbi*, of St. Peter's, of the Vatican, and of the ruins, therefore my one journey may count for ten.

Unluckily Rome is expensive, it contains as

many beggars as inhabitants, which makes visits to palaces and galleries somewhat impossible.

I return entirely on account of my mother's affairs, which I wish to settle whilst finishing the 'Paysans.'

Truly, people should save money, and go once in their lives to Rome, or else they will never know anything of antiquity, nor of architecture, nor splendour of impossibility realised.

Notwithstanding the short time I have been here, Rome will remain the greatest and most beautiful recollection of my life. If ever you come here, you will understand what a proof of affection it is, to write to anyone, even to one's sister. One must love one's mother very much, to return home to settle affairs and end a novel, instead of finishing once for all with this grand place. I ought even to have had a second and private audience of the Pope; but then I must have stayed another fortnight, and this would carry me on too late. I wish my mother to be free from all annoyances, before I start again on a long journey. I left home so worn out with fatigue that these two months' holiday cannot fail to benefit me, and my head and brain will both be refreshed.

I hope all is well with you, and that your husband has found more bridges to build; that my

nieces are well, and my mother better. My health is much improved. A thousand remembrances to all.

Civita Vecchia: April 1846.

I hope to send this letter by some passenger to Marseilles. To-morrow I embark for Genoa, and I shall travel as rapidly as possible towards Paris. I wish to go through places I have not yet seen, such as the Grisons and Basle. I am looking out for bargains in pictures. I should like to pick up some Hobbemas and Holbeins for a few crowns, for I am desperate about furnishing my house.

With twenty thousand francs, forty thousand might have been made at Cardinal Fesch's sale, where there were not twenty persons. I am very sorry to leave Rome. Adieu! I shall return by Strasburg.

To Madame Hanska, Rome.

Paris: June 14, 1846.

Dear Countess,—In yesterday's 'Presse' is an article communicated by Russia (the 'Presse' is its organ at Paris), which has made me so anxious that I send it you.

This Russian article seems to indicate very serious things. I believe the Government will despoil the landowners; my anxiety regarding

your interests is excessive. Will your children have time? . . .

What does this article mean? Tell me what you think; it seems written by one who is pretending to be ignorant of affairs.

15th.

Yesterday I wrote eight folio pages; the heat was intense. M. F. came, and I only went to bed at half-past seven, but I had to awake out of my first sleep for, at half-past nine, the waggons brought the Adam and Eve and the St. Peter, and my presence was necessary; the porter having paid sixty francs too much; the mistake had to be explained, the discussions thereon lasted till nearly eleven, and I did not get to sleep again till midnight. I had nothing to pay with, excepting a thousand franc note; at such a time of night change was difficult to find, and then I had the things unpacked to amuse M. F. and an artist who was with us. The 'Natoire' is charming, signed, and perfectly authentic. The St. Peter by Holbein is thought sublime. The artist, a great connoisseur, said at auction it would fetch three thousand francs.

Thus I have a thousand and forty francs paid. My situation is even better than I thought. With

ten thousand francs all will be finished. M. F. and my principal creditors recognise the liberal manner in which I wish to treat them.

I can easily manage to pay this. My health is excellent; and talent! . . . oh! how it has returned to me in all its bloom!

Amongst the grand paintings in my sitting-room, the 'Natoire' has a somewhat affected look. I hope to sell the false 'Breughel' for five hundred francs, which will pay for Geneva, and the price of the picture besides.

I am going to write 'L'Histoire des Parents Pauvres,' 'Le Bonhomme Pons,' which will make two or three sheets of the 'Comédie Humaine;' 'La Cousine Bette,' which will make sixteen sheets; 'Les Méfaits d'un Procureur du Roi,' six sheets: total, twenty-five sheets, or twenty thousand francs, newspaper and publisher together; lastly, the 'Paysans.' This is all so much in excess of what I owe. This winter, also, I have 'Les Petits Bourgeois,' the control of the 'Comédie Humaine,' the re-issue of the 'Contes drôlatiques,' and my Comedy. I think I shall have earned the right to travel a little; and I shall have, besides, a small house to myself, and no debts. Write and tell me when I may come to you.

It is necessary I should write two or three

first-rate works, to demolish the false gods of this bastard literature, and which may prove that I am younger, fresher, and more capable of work than ever.

'Le Vieux Musicien' is the poor relation, broken with humiliations and insults, kind-hearted, pardoning everything, and only revenging himself by benefits. 'La Cousine Bette' is the female poor relation, also treated with humiliations and insults, living in the midst of two or three families, and there meditating revenge for the wounds to her self-love and vanity. These two stories, with 'Pierrette,' will constitute the 'Histoire des Parents Pauvres.'

To Madame Hanska, Rome.

Paris: July 14, 1846.

Dear Countess,—I have nothing new to tell you, except that I am very tired. I have passed the whole night looking up my paid bills and receipts, a very tiresome occupation. I am really frightened to find very honest people asking again in all good faith for what has been already paid them, and looking quite stupid when their receipts are placed before them. My solicitor, M. Picard, tells me this happens constantly. You have no idea of the kind of life (like a hunted hare) I

have led from 1836 to 1846. The condition of my papers shows it in a lamentable manner; it is heart-breaking! Six months at least would be required to place them in order. Owing to my sudden and numerous changes of residence, my business papers have been carelessly piled together, put into chests, twisted, crumpled and torn. A large bookcase with many drawers would be necessary to arrange them all. I want space; I am stifling here.

The beautiful furniture is spoiling; a house of my own is as much a necessity as the payment of my debts. I am as much hurried to-day as in 1837. I have no time for anything. The execution of the sixteen volumes of the 'Comédie Humaine' is to me an inexplicable miracle.

Two years of calm and quiet in a house like the Maison Potier are absolutely necessary in order to heal my soul, after sixteen years of successive catastrophes. I am weary of this incessant struggle, which is as great to-day, when I am paying off my last debts, as when it was a matter of paying the whole; and always the crushing burden of literary work in the midst of all the other irksome affairs. If it were not for the fresh sources of courage which have arisen in my heart, I should be like one shipwrecked, whose

strength has buffeted for the whole day against the violent billows, I should sink under the gentlest of ripples close to the shore. Is my life to be called living? I ask you, torn and tossed perpetually by disappointments and contrarieties, which would drive most men mad? . . . .

Good heaven! Without you what should I become? With what a sense of unutterable gratitude I look at the casket which contains your letters, those treasures of intelligence and goodness. You who have been my friend, my benefactress, so patient, so gentle, without misunderstanding of any kind, without reproaches or vexations, you are like a clear fountain always flowing, in short, '*je voudrais pouvoir vous aimer davantage.*'

Thursday, 16th.

Yesterday I came in late, and found the picture-restorer waiting. He is the best in Paris, an old pupil of David and of Gros, he is a great connoisseur. I sent for the little man a fortnight ago; he has taken a fortnight to come. Then my frames! . . a whole month, and they are not begun. Such is Paris all over; if so much time and energy are required for the smallest things, imagine what it must be in business matters!

I am setting valiantly to work; two long nights

have been passed over 'Les Parents Pauvres.' I believe it will be really a fine work, extraordinary even amongst those with which I am most satisfied. It is seven in the morning. I have been three hours hoeing away at my proofs; it is arduous work, for this story resembles 'César Birotteau,' and 'L'Interdiction;' the point to be worked out is to excite an interest in an old and poor man.

You ought to be well pleased with Méry's novel, it is charming! what a mind that fellow has! He really has too much; he is like a shop full of crystals. He is to breakfast with me to-day.

To the Countess Hanska.

Paris: July 17, 1846.

Yesterday, dear Countess, Bertin came to breakfast. It was delicate, fine, and superfine, I assure you. He was delightful, and remained long talking and admiring my pictures and my *bric-à-brac.* To-day I am to dine with Madame de Girardin. I want to see her husband, to settle with him about 'Les Paysans.'

Bertin was stupefied at the sight of all my riches; he found the *tête-à-tête* of old Sèvres exquisite, and he told me that I could easily sell my beautiful service of Chinese porcelain for three or

four thousand francs. He told me that he had commissioned one of the most skilful and influential members of our mission to China to obtain some choice specimens of old Chinese ware, but that he was told there was no longer anything of the kind left in China, nothing but modern; the old china is snapped up by the mandarins, the Court, and the rich men of the country, and that the prices are much higher there than in Paris.

Your half-countryman, Walewski, is, it is said, about to marry Mdlle. Ricci, granddaughter of Stanislas Poniatowski, and descended on the female side from Machiavelli. It is said that her dowry is one hundred thousand francs, and three hundred thousand in expectancy. Walewski is madly in love with her, and in his quality of *Dandy* can find no other way of proving it, except by marrying her.

What will become of the son of that great man Colonna Walewski on such a slender civil list?

To Madame Hanska.

Paris: July 18, 1846.

I came home at one this morning from Madame de Girardin's. The dinner was given for

Madame de Hahn, a famous actress in Germany, whom a gentleman, endowed with an income of fifty thousand francs, has taken from the stage, and married, in spite of the small gentry of his family and of his caste.

Madame de Girardin had her two great men, Hugo and Lamartine; the two Germans, husband and wife; Dr. Cabarrus and his daughter (the Doctor is a son of Ouvrard and Madame Tallien; he has been from childhood the friend of Émile de Girardin); lastly, your humble servant. At ten o'clock the dinner was over. After a political *tartine* of Hugo's, I let myself go to an improvisation, in which I fought and beat him, with some success, I assure you. Lamartine seemed charmed; he thanked me heartily. He wishes more than ever that I should enter the Chamber; but be tranquil, I shall never pass through the door of my own to enter it.

I won Lamartine by my appreciation of his last speech on the affairs of Syria. I was quite sincere, for, indeed, this speech is magnificent from beginning to end. Lamartine has been very great and brilliant this session! Though what destruction from a physical point of view! This man of fifty-six appears to be eighty at least; he is destroyed, finished up, and can only have a few

years' life left in him; he is consumed by ambition, and harassed by his affairs.

I wish all my cases were safely unpacked; the beautiful objects expected, the anxiety to know in what state they are, affect me too strongly, especially in the irritable state caused by the continued fever of inspiration and sleeplessness.

I will tell you how many pages I write to-night; it ought to be twelve, if I am to be satisfied with myself.

To M. Georges Mniszech,[1] *Wiesbaden.*

Paris: August 1846.

My dear Gringalet,—Thanks to you, old Bilboquet[2] possesses a glorious masterpiece, which, like the 'Joueur de Violon,' makes the sun of a gallery. You can no more imagine the beauty of this 'Chevalier de Malte' you have chosen, than the atrocious villany of the Roman dealers. Minghetti had smoked the picture with bistre, in order to hide a thump on the forehead from some broom-handle, and some drops of wax on the hands which frightened him, besides the thick

[1] *Maître Cornelius* is dedicated to him.

[2] Balzac, in a joking manner, customary with him, compared, as has been already shown, the little caravan formed by his friends from Vierzschovnia and himself, to Bilboquet's *troupe* of 'saltimbanques,' or mountebanks.

layer which candle-smoke and other ecclesiastical causes had laid on this sublime canvas.

You recollect Schnetz found some incongruity between the hands and face, and you yourself, dear Georges, feared there had been some re-touching. Well, no, all is as harmonious as in a well-preserved original of Titian. More light is thrown on the hands than on the face, that is all; what excites most admiration is the dress, which you hardly noticed, and which, in the phrase of connoisseurs, *contains a man.* When the picture-cleaner who had been recommended to me came (a good little old fellow who loves painting as Paganini loved music), he said, 'Sir, it is a master-piece; but what shall we find underneath?' and he went away with an anxious mind.

Three days afterwards he returned, bringing his drugs with him. He laid the 'Le Chevalier' on a table, took a powerful composition and said, 'Come, it must be done! Let us begin on one corner.'

The drug, put on cotton-wool, made the picture froth and everything turned white.

'Very good,' he said, 'I see I may go on.'

He rubbed the whole canvas over, and in an hour's time he had put aside a pound of cotton wool in little black balls. 'This,' he said, 'is what

the Roman dealer put on!' (Nothing was yet to be seen.) But why? There was a reason; the picture might turn out to be spoiled; full of touching-up, it might no longer exist, for there appeared a second crust! This was more serious; could he go on?

He went on, he took three other drugs, the picture frothed, turned white, and disappeared in this combat of drugs. He put on his double spectacles and said, 'Now I am sure of the picture!'

I saw nothing but a beery froth.

At last, with an air of triumph, he asked for a fine tooth-brush, and some soap, saying, 'You will see a true masterpiece!'

I still saw nothing but the beery froth. 'Now,' added he, 'We shall know why the Roman dealer put on the bistre.'

Then, under the scouring of the good old man, the picture began to shine out like a sun in all his splendour.

I perceived tones of palpitating flesh, luminous touches; the gold of the chains and sword, the hands, the dress, the background, all appeared at once, like dawn in spring.

He then rinsed it with water, and said, 'See!' In fact, it was a resurrection; from beneath the

sponge a man came out, of such striking truth, it seemed as if a third person was in the room. The design cannot be imagined; I assure you, my dear Georges, it seems to stand out from the canvas. He put it outside in the garden to dry in the sun. It was a man, a real living Knight of Malta in the flesh! This poor picture, which was born again under my eyes, was, after three hundred years, as if it had been finished but yesterday.

With a magnifying-glass he discovered a frayed mark, beginning at the forehead and ending below the eye, composed of little holes made by the point of a needle; then a spot of wax on the forehead, and a drop on the hands. When the picture was dry, he took a needle and with the point he took off the stains with surprising delicacy, and taking only the wax, not touching the colour. Then, with the point of a brush he put colour into the little holes. Then he fed the picture with a mixture (a secret of his), which, without running over or altering the colour in the least, restores to it a body and depth, giving it clearness and solidity. In eight days all has become fresh and oily; in fact, a miracle.

Many here believe I am a mystifier, and that the picture is just painted. The cleaner declares

Sebastian del Piombo was incapable of painting it; he inclines to your opinion, and thinks it is by a Flemish artist, a pupil of Raphael. I flatter myself it is an Albert Dürer, painted during his journey to Rome. In any case, it is one of the best works of the Italian Renaissance, of the school of Raphael, with progress in colour. Indeed, my little old man looks on it as a most precious object of art, as he finds in it the last traditions of three schools: Venice, Rome, and Flanders.

This good little man has let me have, for a mere nothing (comparatively), out of pure love, a magnificent *trouvaille* of his, a portrait of the wife of Greuze, painted by Greuze himself, and which served him as model for his famous 'Accordée de Village.' Until you have seen this, you know nothing of the French school. In a certain way, Rubens, Rembrandt, Raphael, Titian, are not greater. It is breathing, living flesh, life itself, not labour, but inspiration, it is the *furia francese*, which enables us to triumph even over the faults it causes us to commit.

It was dashed off in two hours, with the remains of colour on the palette, in a moment of passion and enthusiasm, to which the artist yielded.

Greuze gave this sketch to his wife, forbidding

her ever to sell it. She bequeathed it to her sister. This sister was living twenty years ago. An accident tore the canvas; she thought it spoiled, and gave it to a neighbour; who, in her turn, got rid of it as a cumbrous and useless article in her small house.

My cleaner has mended, or rather re-sewn, the canvas; it does not show, and, I assure you, in its way, it is as good as the 'Knight of Malta.' My collection has lately been enriched, first, by an 'Aurora' of Guido, in his great style when he was all Caravaggio; and, secondly, by a 'Rape of Europa,' which Lazard declares to be a Domenichino, but I rather think it is an Annibale Carracci. Let me recapitulate: with my 'Judgment of Paris,' 'Flemish Woman,' the 'Greuze,' the 'Knight of Malta,' the 'Venetian,' the 'Vandyke,' the 'Aurora,' the 'Rape of Europa;' this makes a good little beginning of a gallery. When the connoisseurs and *dilettanti* come, I shall say I owe this picture to a young professor of entomology, a charming young man, clever and good, at this moment buried in happiness, science, and the steppes of the Ukraine; he understands pictures, which is a blessing for his friends.

Soon I hope, dear Georges, to bring you a

boxful of marvellous insects; but alas! I cannot stay with you more than five or six days.

Mille amitiés.

To M. Georges Mniszech, Wiesbaden.

Paris: September 1846.

My dear and good Georges,—As soon as you have received this letter, will you do me the favour to go to Mayence, to the upholsterer who causes *émeutes* of an evening by the exhibition of his rich furniture or *meubles*, and purchase a good arm-chair *à la Voltaire*, and a foot-warmer, both covered with Persian carpet? Make a stipulation that the two articles are to be returned to the upholsterer at the end of a month, for an agreed sum. For example, if they cost two hundred francs, he will take them back for one hundred. After having made this arrangement, you will have these articles sent off as soon as possible and placed in the drawing-room of our dear Atala. You know she never complains; but we who see her so uncomfortable, cannot stand it any longer. Make it a surprise on the part of the *troupe*. I will repay you the sum it costs.

A bientôt, dear Georges. Say to Zéphirine, I do homage at her feet; she would rather hear it from you than if I wrote it direct to her.

To M. Georges Mniszech, Wiesbaden.

Paris: October 1846.

My very dear Georges,—As, no doubt, you have executed my commission for our dear, great, and well-beloved Atala, I thank you warmly; and if it were necessary to fetch you some dreadful insect from the pole or torrid zone, I would go!

. . . . . .

I am grieved to tell you I only took the *cato-xantha* on the express condition that it should be *sound, whole, and not mended;* and, considering the price asked, and the seller not being able to give a definite answer, I did not like to take it, as your dear mother-in-law wished this insect to be the pride of your collection. Have I done right? Would you be contented with a crippled *cato-xanthæ*? . . .

Thank you again and again for your attentions in the way of *bric-à-brac*; but in future we must be careful not to amass any more porcelain, as the Hôtel Bilboquet has already enough and too much. . . . . .

I shall not say any more now, for I shall meet you on the evening of the 17th, barring accidents. My place is taken in the mail, and I am working hard to finish "La Cousine Bette."

Kiss for me the little white hand of the charming humming-bird, called Zéphirine, who is so good as to remind me of the middle of October with such kind persistence. I have seen many young persons, but I know none whom I could place on an equality with her without doing her great injustice. Only the day before yesterday I compared her to my niece, who came to consult me about a marriage, and I found my poor niece to be of a humiliating inferiority. Anna possesses that which makes the charm of life; she has grace. I much prefer her to my niece, who, however, has the freshness of a pretty Norman girl. Whilst she was talking to me, I involuntarily placed Zéphirine beside her; and, I I know not whether it was the effect of a peculiar affection for a young girl whom one has known as a little child, and in whom one has loved the mother, but I much preferred the image of the absent one to my niece, who was there before me in the flesh. It is true my niece was crying a good deal; and your dear Anna knows nothing of life but its smiles, and if by any chance a tear of emotion moistens her eyes, it does not stay long enough to make them red or the eyelids swollen.

Now, to finish about your insects, if you want the *caloxantha*, although mutilated, write to tell

me. You have still time, unless, indeed, it should have been bought up by some one as greedy as yourself about these little beasts. The absence of my dear *troupe* makes me religious. I find myself praying with fervour and beseeching protection of God for Madame *mère*, Anna, and yourself. Take care of each other until I come to take care of you all.

Many pretty things, a thousand thoughts and flowers of affection to your dear and darling Anna; a thousand things to your Excellency, dear Count, Duke of Gringalétie, in Georgia, from your old friend.

To M. Georges Mniszech.

Paris: October 18, 1846.

My excellent, adorable, loving, darling, dear little *saltimbanques*,—Father Bilboquet sends in his resignation. Gringalet has grown up, Zéphirine is emancipated; in the play she marries a dreadful Ducantal; *mais nous avons changé tout cela*, as Molière says; she is happy with Gringalet, a sphynx-lepidopterian-coleopterian-antediluvian, but I hope not fossil, Gringalet. The company, my dear enrolled ones, is so celebrated it could not give its last representation mysteriously as was desired, on account of Gringalet's *paletot*.

Your collective letter has given me great pleasure. I see you so happy now (and I hope to the very end of your lives), that one feels touched by it.

Anna's dear mother is, as you know, the only affection I have had in my whole life; she has been the only consolation I have had in all my sorrows, my work, and my misfortunes; she calmed everything and restored everything to its balance. This will tell you, dear Georges, how much I am attached to her daughter, and explain all the interest I take in her happiness.

Not only does she love you with all the strength of the purest and proudest soul I have ever admired in a young girl, but I say, without the least wish to flatter you, that you deserve this diamond-like affection, and during the last two years I have seen the just cause she has to love you. Our dear Countess counts for a great deal in Anna's perfections, who has never left her. She reserved this treasure for you, knowing you to be worthy of it.

The riches of Bilboquet are beginning to make some noise. All goes well at the little Beaujon house; the workmen are hard at work; you may laugh, but there will be the apartments of the Mniszechs. If ever they come to Paris, Bilboquet would die of grief if they went to an hotel. Their

suite of rooms consists of a large room and a little drawing-room, both circular, the walls of carved wood, and the ceilings ornamented with paintings, all *d'une recherche royale* worthy of their ancestors. Beaujon, not I, did this. This worthy financier, foreseeing a lepidopterian Georges would come there, had beautiful exotic butterflies painted on the flowers.

When you read this scrawl, 'La Cousine Bette' will be finished. 'Le Cousin Pons,' also, perhaps. The fall in the Northern Railway shares is terrible, and funds are wanted for the Hôtel Bilboquet.

To Madame Hanska, Wiesbaden.

Passy: October 18. 6 o'clock P.M.

Here I am, dear sovereign star, quietly sitting at my desk, at the hour mentioned in the little note written in the 'Messager' office. Before again taking up my work, I cannot resist the need I feel to talk to you and tell you all the little details of this life, which has become your own. From Frankfort to Forbach, I existed only in the remembrance of you, going over my four days like a cat who has finished her milk, and then sits licking her lips. All the precautions with which you and your children's goodness surrounded me,

the shawl and the hood, have entirely cured my cold, and I am quite well.

I paid the duty on the little Dresden service. Custom-houses have no respect for the sorrows of the heart. I had to leave my sad reveries and moving remembrances to look after the packing-cases. I was alone in the mail, a heavenly blessing.

At Verdun I met Germeau, coming from Paris, with his wife. I thanked him for his intervention at the Douane.

When you come to Forbach in your carriage, you will be received with all the attention due to your social position. I promise you will not be searched. I flew like the mail to Paris, arriving there at six A.M. During this part of the journey my cold redoubled, in spite of my precautions, which, I assure you, were infinite; but it had rained torrents in France, and the malicious damp penetrated the pores of the rough carapace of the mail. I was faint with hunger, want of sleep, and fatigue; I went to bed at seven, and got up at eleven to breakfast.

In the midst of this frugal meal, the Editor of the 'Constitutionnel' suddenly appeared; he found me partly breakfasting, partly correcting the proofs of 'La Cousine Bette,' which, he told me, has had a dazzling success.

I am sure you will hear with some pleasure of a great reaction in my favour. At last, I have conquered! Again my protecting star has watched over me; once again an angel of hope and peace has touched me with her watchful and guardian wing. At this moment both the world and the newspapers are turning towards me with favour; it is like an acclamation, a general consecration. Those who strove, strive no more, those most hostile (Soulié, for example) are on my side. You know, Soulié made an *amende honorable* in his new drama at the Ambigu. Dear Countess, it is a great year for me, especially if 'Les Paysans' and 'Les Petits Bourgeois' are published one after the other, if I have the luck to do well, if your taste and that of the public agree in thinking them good.

Pray tell me to conclude this letter and return to 'La Cousine Bette.' I really gossip too much, and with too much pleasure; but it is an enjoyment so delightful, so irresistible, to give myself thus wholly to your fraternal soul!

Allons, back to the pen and the work!

To Madame Hanska.

Paris: November 20, 1846.

Ouf! I have just corrected eight hundred lines of 'La Cousine Bette,' and the first eight chapters of 'Le Cousin Pons.' Since this morning I have not left my easy chair—it is now past three.

I have put more wood on the fire, and sat thinking of you, with my feet on my *chauffeuse*. What happiness the thought of seeing you again gives me!—it penetrates my whole being.

I desire so much to be with you three once more! and to think there are still three hundred pages to be written and corrected! . . .

Decidedly, I must get the *secrétaire* and the Louis XVI. cupboard from Tours; the room will then be complete.

It is a matter of a thousand francs; but what could be had for a thousand francs in modern furniture?—*Bourgeois* platitudes, wretched things, without value and without taste.

Friday.

You tell me not to work so much, to look after my health, to amuse myself, to see people, &c.

But, dear Countess, did I not write to you that I had made engagements for the payment of my debts, counting on a rise in the value of my Northern shares to sell them? Now, yesterday the Northern Railway was at 627 francs; it will fall to 575—two hundred francs a share below what I paid for them; therefore, my pen must earn what my shares ought to have brought.

See if I have time for amusement! It is a miracle I can clear myself at all. 'Les Parents Pauvres' ought to give me altogether twelve thousand francs; 'La Cousine Bette' alone, thirteen thousand, and 'Le Cousin Pons,' nine thousand: I have thus nearly written double what I proposed. I have written forty-eight sheets of the 'Comédie Humaine,' instead of twenty-four. Do you think this is done by scribbling at a gallop, in the way I write to you?

Ah! *bon Dieu*, it is terrible! Even now, I tremble while writing this. . . . I am not very sure all I have done will be enough to help me out of this scrape! . . . 'Les Paysans' must be finished, and something perhaps besides; it is necessary—indispensable even.

My courage is truly surprising; you will believe it, when I tell you that since my return from Wiesbaden I have written all you are reading of

'La Cousine Bette,' from the famous chapter, 'Bilan de Madame Marneffe'—which, *par parenthèse*, has had a wonderful success. All these twenty chapters, dear Countess, were written *currente calamo*, and done one day, to appear the next, without proofs. You have been this time, as always, my true inspiring genius.

Yesterday I called on Laurent-Jan, with a proposal that he should dialogue the piece for the Variétés, for I have an avalanche of work up to November 30, and I wish to leave on December 1. I have not time to spare on it. It would have brought him in several thousand francs, but he refused on the pretext that it was too much, too colossal, for his feeble talents. The real truth of this touching modesty is, his unconquerable idleness. Nature gives talents, but man must set them in motion, and bring them forth by his will, perseverance, and courage. Now, this man has intellect, but he will never do anything with it; he will fritter and wear it out, along with his boots, on the Boulevards or in the boxes of actresses at the small theatres, who only laugh at him. . . . .

I was interrupted by Dr. Nacquart; he was very angry on finding me at work, after all he and his medical brethren had said on the subject; he cannot understand how any brain can undergo

such a strain. He said more than once with a sinister air, 'it would come to no good.' He begs me at least to leave some interval between these debauches of the brain (as he calls them). The effort of improvising 'La Cousine Bette' in six weeks frightened him. He said, 'This must of necessity end in something serious.' The truth is, I feel myself that I am touched in some way; in conversation I seek, sometimes painfully, for substantives. I forget *names*; if I had not been so anxious about my financial affairs, the arrangement of my little house would have made a salutary and happy diversion from my literary occupations. It is time I should take some rest. When the doctor made these observations on my literary excesses, I said, 'But, doctor, you forget my debts? I have engagements to meet at certain fixed times; at the end of every month I must be prepared. I must earn money, therefore; that is to say, I must write till I can knock off my chains by means of courage and labour.' You will never guess the doctor's answer. It shows the man; you must bear in mind that he is my friend, that he not only has a strong regard for me, but he also has a great esteem for me.

'Well, my friend,' he said, 'I do not write beautiful things like you; but I can manage my

affairs better. As a proof, three days ago, I bought by auction a five-storied house in the Rue de Trevise for 235,000 francs; as there must be an outlay of 25,000 francs, it makes the cost 260,000 francs."

All the mind, all the character, of our *bourgeoisie* is in this reply; it makes the world go round with its fortune, as the aristocracy of past times did with their personal advantages or privileges.

You should have read the article in the 'Constitutionnel' on Siberia; it is enough to make more confiding people than yourself shudder. Therefore, lose no time, the future does not look *couleur de rose.* I see Italy and Germany ready to bestir themselves; the present state of peace only hangs on a thread, viz., the life of Louis-Philippe, who is growing old, and God knows what will become of us if war comes! . . . For a young and ambitious sovereign, who does not desire, like Louis-Philippe, to die quietly in his bed, the present would be a favourable moment to recover the left bank of the Rhine! All the nations of Europe are plagued by imbecile sovereigns. England is squabbling with Ireland, which is intent either to ruin her, or to separate from her. The whole of Italy is preparing to shake off the yoke

of Austria. Germany is looking for unity, or perhaps, only for more liberty. In any way, you may consider we are on the eve of great political catastrophes.

Here is day-break. I have been gossiping with you for two hours with pleasure, and without fatigue, with happiness I tell you. *A bientôt!*

To M. Georges Mniszech, Drèsden.

Paris: December 1846.

Thanks, my dear Georges, for your two letters! thanks, dear and charming Anna!

Well, you have been fêted, you are amusing yourselves, and taking care of your dear mother! I am very unhappy at being all alone, without my company. At last I am able to enjoy the sight of the magnificent Georgian china vase; in my estimation, it comes immediately after my two great mandarins. It is the admiration of the dealers, who ask me where I get these things. I answer, 'Oh! I have some famous commercial travellers!' . . . This vase is perfectly whole and entire. Anna's dish is the most beautiful I have seen. Everything, dear friends, has arrived in perfect condition without a chip, and the good Parisian *douane*, taking ffs. (florins) for francs, has only charged forty-eight francs of duty.

The great cracked plate will be mended; it will be made into a stand. O Zéphirine! O Gringalet! happy *saltimbanques*, who perhaps show your delight in the country of porcelain a little too much! You must know that, for the sum of seventy-five francs, I have had the extraordinary luck to complete my Wiesbaden tea-service. I have got a sugar-basin, and milk-jug exactly like it, marked with the same number. Neither you nor I knew it was a Watteau service. Atala, led by her charming lovely little nose, laid her pretty hand upon it. You will learn with astonishment, this now complete service is worth two thousand francs, offered . . . But no distress will compel Father Bilboquet to part with such *souvenirs*. All you have touched, all which recalls to me the two beloved *ouistitis*, the two lovers, the two gipsies, all is sacred. I must leave you now, to go and drink my poison of coffee in Anna's covered cup.

I have bought for the guest-chamber a bed, said to have belonged to Madame de Pompadour. I do not know whose it is, but I assure you it is magnificent. It is being regilded. The *salon* of the Hôtel Bilboquet looked so mean by the side of the two cupola apartments, which are carved and painted in the style of Louis XVI., that I have

bought a whole *salon* in carved wood of the greatest magnificence. It is doubtful if there is anything like it in Paris.

The carvers of that time carved their flowers from natural living flowers, as may be seen by the arrangement and the lightness of the carving. But alas! I cannot afford to gild it, and, besides, it would dwarf the height of the room, which is not at all high.

Adieu! A thousand kind things. Your dear mother will to-morrow have a long letter.

To Madame Georges Mniszech, Dresden.

Paris: January 1847.

My dear Anna,—I should be very ungrateful if I were to leave your charming letter without reply, especially at the beginning of a new year; which will, I hope, bring fresh happiness to you. You, perhaps, know whether the affection I have felt towards you so many years is capable of increase. I cannot tell. I can only continue it. I wish you would persuade Georges to give me some new entomological commissions. Tell him I am heartily grateful for his portrait of 'Leonidas'; and that, in return, I wish he would let me know what shells and insects he most desires to have

from the ends of the world. Thinking of him, I have gained the good-will of six whaling-vessels, and of six Doctors Daruel, who are all burning with the desire to fetch something to oblige me, even from the shores of the Antarctic Sea. One of the vessels will be named 'Le Balzac,' and we shall receive the most magnificent specimens of Polar insects that can be found in or upon, or round about whales and bottle-nosed whales, to say nothing of shells. But it will be necessary to tell them what we want. *Adieu, chère* Zéphirine.

To M. Georges Mniszech, Vierzschovnia.

Paris: February 27, 1847.

My dear Anna, and my dear Georges,—Do not feel the least uneasiness about your dear mother. In the first place, she is here in the strictest *incognito*; in the next, she is fully reassured about her health.

Charged with the immense task of supplying the place of her dear children, who are so essential to her happiness, and I may say to mine, as all my human affections are concentrated on these three dear beings, I made myself into forty thousand, not to make her forget those dear ones

who are the soul of her life and thoughts, but to render their absence more endurable.

Our dear adored Atala is established in a charming and magnificent apartment (not too expensive). She has a garden; she goes often to the convent, and sometimes to the play. I try to divert her, and to be as much like Anna as possible; but the name of her dear daughter is daily and hourly on her lips; only the day before yesterday, as she was amusing herself very much at the Variétés, laughing at the 'Filleul de tout le monde,' played by Bouffé and Hyacinthe,—in the midst of her enjoyment, she asked herself, with a piercing accent which brought tears into my eyes, how she could laugh and amuse herself thus, without her *dear little girl?* I must confess, dear Zéphirine, I took the liberty to tell her, you were amusing yourself very well without her, with your lord and master, the King of the Coleopteræ; I was quite sure you were at that moment one of the happiest women alive. I hope Gringalet, upon whom I drew this bill, will have honoured it.

Against this perpetual remembrance of you, I have brought forward respectable forces: 1. the Conservatoire; 2. the Opera; 3. the Italiens; 4. the Exposition, &c. I have put all my business on one side, excepting the arrangement of

my house, and I devote myself to this great work, the most difficult I ever undertook—that of preventing a mother, separated from a child so adorable as her Grace the Countess Georges, from dying of grief.

Soon, my beloved ones, I shall have finished the great task of my life, I shall be rid of all my debts. I hope even to have a hundred thousand francs of capital. The first use I shall make of my independence in money matters will be to go and see you at your estates.

A thousand, and yet a thousand, kind things from your faithfully devoted

BILBOQUET.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: October 8, 1847.

My dear Sister,—I arrived here without other accident than excessive fatigue, having travelled more than a quarter of the earth's diameter in eight days, without stopping or going to bed; if I had doubled the distance I might have found myself beyond the Himalayas! As I arrived before my letters, I took my friends very much by surprise. They were much touched by my eagerness.

This house is just like a Louvre, and the estates are as large as one of our Departments.

The extent and fertility of these estates can hardly be imagined; they are never manured, and are cropped every year with wheat.

Although the young Count and Countess have, between them, something like twenty thousand male peasants, which makes forty thousand souls, four hundred thousand would be necessary to cultivate the whole of the estates. No more is sown than can be harvested.

This country is singular in one way; by the side of the greatest magnificence, the commonest objects of comfort are wanting. This estate is the only one in the country possessing a Carcel lamp, and a hospital. There are mirrors here ten feet high, and no hangings on the walls; nevertheless, Vierzschovnia is considered the most luxurious habitation in the Ukraine, which is as large as France. An admirable tranquillity is enjoyed here. The authorities were full of attentions, I might almost say *galanteries*, towards me; without these miracles, I could not have made a step in my journey, ignorant as I am of the language of the countries through which I passed.

My arrival was preceded by a terrible fire, which burnt several houses; and two days after I witnessed the fearful spectacle of another fire.

Though these estates are fertile, the exchange of raw produce into money is exceedingly difficult, as the stewards steal, and hands fail for threshing out the grain, which is done with machines. Nevertheless, no idea can be formed of the riches and power of Russia; it must be seen to be believed. This power and these riches are all territorial, which sooner or later will make Russia mistress of the European markets in natural productions.

Two days ago I caught a bad cold, which perhaps will last two months. I cannot leave the house. I ought to go to Kiev, the Northern Rome, the city of three hundred churches, to pay my respects to the Governor-General, the viceroy of three governments large as an empire, and to obtain permission to remain here. It will be a material impossibility to return to Paris for the next eight months, as winter is beginning, and I cannot risk a journey in winter. It is probable I shall be in Paris towards April; I shall certainly return here, as we wish to make a journey to the Crimea and the Caucasus, going as far as Tiflis. This journey *me sourit*. Nothing is more beautiful than those places; they resemble Switzerland, *plus* the sea, and a tropical vegetation.

Allons, adieu! one word more. The cholera

is coming back: it is either at Kiev or not far away, ravaging like a conscientious cholera. Have no fear for me, the cholera only kills uncles with fortunes, and my fortune is not yet big enough for the cholera to notice me, it leaves alone those who are in debt.

Mille amitiés to all, and yourself especially.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: November 1847.

My dear Sister,—The enormous riches accumulated in Russia can scarcely be imagined, but they are rendered useless for want of means of transport. We are warmed here (and Vierzschovnia is a palace) with straw! As much straw as is to be seen in the market-place of St.-Laurent at Paris is here burnt in the stoves every week. The other day I went into the *follwark* of Vierzschovnia, the place where the cornmills and threshing machines are. This village has twenty mills, thirty feet high, fifty feet long, and twelve feet wide.

The ordinary outlay on the estate, besides robberies by the stewards, much diminishes the income. We, in France, have no idea of this kind of existence. At Vierzschovnia all sorts of trades

are obliged to be carried on at home: there is a confectioner, an upholsterer, a tailor, a shoemaker, &c., attached to the house. I can now understand the three hundred servants the late M. H —— used to tell me about at Geneva; he had a whole orchestra in his service. Count Georges Mniszech, the happy husband of the Countess Anna, possesses in Volhynia a castle, which is the Versailles of Poland: I am to see it. It is his brother who lives in it, for Count Mniszech lives at Vierzschovnia.

My greatest wish and hope is still far from its accomplishment. Madame Hanska is indispensable to her children; she is their guide; she disentangles for them the intricacies of the vast and difficult administration of this property.

She has given up everything to her daughter. I have known of her intentions ever since I was at St. Petersburg. I am delighted, because the happiness of my life will thus be freed from all self-interest. It makes me all the more earnest to guard what is confided to me. I shall be in money difficulties for about two years more; the year 1848 will be so very hard to pass through, that I shall be obliged to delay for some months the payment of my mother's settlement, unless my literary work should be very productive.

It was necessary to come here to make me understand the difficulties of all kinds which stand in the way of the fulfilment of my desires.

Cholera spreads in a cruel way around us. It has carried off nine thousand persons at Savataf; and at Kiev, where I have just been, it carried away forty to fifty persons in a day. I have been to Kiev at last; the ladies went there with me. The young Count was away; he was on his way home from visiting an estate of immense extent, as large as all our Department of the Seine-et-Marne, watered by three rivers, the Dnieper, the Pripet, and the Teterhof. He had to discharge a dishonest steward. We went to Kiev to meet him on his return, and now I have seen the Rome of the North, the Tartar town, with three hundred churches, and the riches of *la Lauzat*, the St.-Sophia of the steppes. It is well worth seeing once. I was overwhelmed with attentions. Would you believe it? a rich *moujik* has read all my works and burns a candle for me before St.-Nicholas every week; he has promised money to the servants of a sister of Madame Hanska, to let him know when I come again, that he may see me. We have an excellent physician settled here; for Vierzschovnia has a certain population, on account of a manufactory of very good cloth. A

paletot is being made for me of this native cloth, lined with fur of the Siberian fox, the cloth is equal to that of France. They manufacture 10,000 pieces of this cloth a year.

I have a beautiful little set of rooms, composed of a *salon*, a sitting-room, and bed-room. The sitting-room is in rose-coloured stucco, with a chimney-piece, a superb carpet, and comfortable furniture. The windows are like large mirrors without silvering, so I can see the landscape on all sides. You may imagine what this Louvre at Vierzschovnia is like, when there are five or six sets of spare rooms of the same kind.

As I am working hard at present in order to have something to publish on my return, for the wherewithal to settle my affairs, I breakfast alone, and only go down to dinner; but the ladies and the Count pay me little visits. It is an entirely patriarchal life, without any ceremony. Everything in this place is in keeping; but elsewhere there is a curious union of luxury and squalor. Such is Kiev. I shall bring home some views of Kiev for my staircase, done by a German artist, and very well lithographed.

Your letters have given me much pleasure; and I am delighted to learn, through my mother, that the little house in the Rue Fortunée is well

guarded. Madame Hanska had the liveliest anxiety about this habitation, knowing it to be so full of valuables. It is the produce of six years of saving, and she is afraid of thieves or some disaster.

I have shrunk from the expense of insuring the furniture, while there is so much yet to be spent for plate, linen, more furniture, a carriage, &c. It is a nest made bit by bit. My mother would do well to go every week, and ask if I have arrived, and to look as if she expected me, this will keep the domestics on the alert.

Adieu! I must end, as this is the day when a Cossack is sent with the letters to Berditchef, a distance of sixty versts over the steppes.

You know all I would say to my nieces. Kiss them for me. My hearty thanks to Surville for all the trouble he has taken; and God keep you all!

You do not say if Surville is doing well, and if he has any bridges to build in 1848.

Write as frequently as you can, and believe in all the affection of the uncle, brother, and son.

Always acknowledge the receipt of my letters, as the Cossacks get drunk and lose the letters; and though they may be beaten, that does not restore lost correspondence.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: January 26, 1848.

My dear Sister,—To-day I received all your letters; there is only just time to thank you for them, as I am making my preparations to depart, and this journey will have to be made in such an intense cold (it was twenty-one degrees this morning) that all manner of precautions are necessary; but my dear friends understand this matter, and I have just been trying on a cloak to throw over the pelisse, which is like a wall.

Some days ago, whilst driving in a sledge, I found that my pelisse of Siberian fox-skin was like a sheet of blotting-paper before this terrible cold. I set off in five days. The necessity of paying-up to the railway calls me imperatively to Paris, and all pleasure must give way to business, especially to business which does not concern myself alone. I write these lines in haste, to beg you to tell my mother to go to the Rue Fortunée, and give notice that I may be expected to arrive after the 16th of February.

There will be no cause for anxiety if I should not come to time, for if the snow accumulates, which is quite possible, there may be a delay of eight or ten days, and I may be kept prisoner in

some horrible little town. Moreover, I have business at Frankfort and at Mayence; and I intend to rest awhile at Berlin, which I have never yet had time to see properly.

The news of this call, sent by Surville in his letter, found me in the midst of a great work, which was getting on well, but which I have been forced to interrupt.

Tell no one of my arrival. I wish to be some time in Paris without being inundated by visitors, who would come down on me; and, above all things, I want to finish my work.

A bientôt! A thousand kind regards to Surville. Kiss my mother, and your daughters for me, and be assured of all my love for yourself.

To M. Champfleury,[1] *Man of Letters, Paris.*

Paris: February 29, 1848.

Sir,—The dedication you have done me the honour to address to me is one of those things the only acknowledgment to which is a hearty grasp of the hand. I ought to come to you, but, owing to circumstances of which you are aware, I am obliged to say, 'Come to me.'

[1] M. Champfleury had dedicated one of his works, *Feu Miette*, to Balzac.

I arrived, from a long and fatiguing journey, a few hours before the Revolution, which will have already explained many things, the delay of this letter amongst the rest.

You are coming on, we are going away, you are young and we are old. For myself I am hopeful about what is to come. You set the example of respect for that which has been, and for conscientious workers; that is good.

If you do me the honour to visit me, come in a morning, and remember that I go away again in a few days. I have the honour, along with all the heads of the literary brotherhood, to salute you.

To M. Froment Meurice, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: 1848.

My dear M. Froment Meurice,—I was so much occupied on the day of my departure that I forgot to speak to you again about the cornelian cup, which you have had in your hands to mount for the last two years, and I am very sorry to have to write to you from here, that it is not even begun. It is thus that French commerce is injured, its inexactness and unpunctuality are the antipodes of the customs of this country, where obedience and exactness are the breath of life.

The French are consequently looked on as fools, and with some show of reason, especially since February 1848. I feel greatly humiliated to see persons like yourself justifying this opinion.

You can, however, still repair the present omission by the exercise of a little good-will. I repeat the details of how the cup is to be mounted, as I feel certain you have forgotten all about them. I wish the cup to be supported at each end by two figures, one representing Hope, the other Faith—Hope must hold a scroll, on which must be engraved on blue enamel, 'Neuchâtel, 1833'; and the figure of Faith to hold another scroll, on which there shall be a figure of Love, kneeling and holding a cup in both hands. The ground on which the cup is to be mounted must represent the cactus, thorny plants, and brambles. The sides of the mount must be ornamented with small bas-reliefs, representing arabesques, garlands of fruit and flowers, all in silver gilt. As I give you six months to execute this commission, I wish you to make a sketch of the design, and send it to my mother, who will forward it to me.

My compliments to Madame Froment Meurice and yourself.

To M. Laurent-Jan, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: 1848.

My dear Laurent,—If the Théâtre Français refuses 'Mercadet,' you may offer the piece, with all the usual precautions, to Frédéric Lemaître. I am enjoying here a quietude which allows me to work. Thus this winter you will receive several 'scenarios,' which may occupy your leisure, as I want your help. You will soon have 'Le Roi des Mendicants.' I should like to know what is ailing our poor France; the Republicans are, it seems to me, obliging her to keep her bed.

I am too much of a patriot not to think of the deep distress which must now be pinching everyone, artists and literary men especially.

What a gulf is Paris at this moment! It has swallowed up L——, H——, and many others, no doubt. And you? What are you doing, my friend? Does the Republic still permit you to breakfast at the Café Cardinal, and to dine at Vachette's?

We have a man here who works in iron in a marvellous manner. If you would send me a design for a cup, however rich, he would work it either in iron or in silver. He is a Benvenuto Cellini, grown up like a mushroom in the midst of

the Ukraine. If you could add to this design some good engravings, which are often to be had for very little, and also make a little collection of ornaments, I will repay the outlay with pleasure. I will tell you how to send them, and thus we shall aid a great artist by giving him some models.

Mille amitiés, notwithstanding your Spartan brevity. Heartily yours.

To Mesdemoiselles Sophie and Valentine Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: November 1848.

Mesdemoiselles and much honoured Nieces,—I am glad of your letters, which have given me the greatest pleasure; and in anyone but an uncle who is known by his *agreeable writings* they would cause the blackest jealousy, from the graceful lightness and perfection of the style.

Thus you deserve as a reward for such fine talents each one to have a pelisse in magnificent *termolama*,[1] trimmed with the best fur, which your august uncle will endeavour to pass through the Custom-house. They will make you the envy of all your companions at the drawing-class. You

[1] A very thick silk.

will never be able to wear out your *termolamas*; this beautiful and solid Circassian stuff lasts from ten to fifteen years. *Termolamas* are like rich uncles; they must be knocked on the head—they must be destroyed on purpose: proceedings which lead in the case of the uncles to the assizes, and in that of the *termolamas* to new ones. *Voilà!*

Now, my poor Sophie, you need not disturb yourself about the music to be played with the Countess Georges. She has a genius, as well as a love, for music; if she had not been an heiress, she would have been a great artiste. If she comes to Paris in eighteen months or two years, she will take lessons in thorough bass and composition. It is all she needs as regards music.

She has (without exaggeration) hands the size of a child of eight years old. These minute, supple, white hands, three of which I could hold in mine, have an iron power of finger, in due proportion, like that of Liszt. The keys, not the fingers, bend; she can compass ten keys by the span and elasticity of her fingers; this phenomenon must be seen to be believed. Music, her mother, and her husband: these three words sum up her character.

She is the Fenella of the fireside; the will-o'-the-wisp of our souls; our gaiety; the life of

the house. When she is not here, the very walls are conscious of her absence—so much does she brighten them by her presence. She has never known misfortune; she knows nothing of annoyances; she is the idol of all who surround her, and she has the sensibility and goodness of an angel: in one word, she unites qualities which moralists consider incompatible; it is, however, only a self-evident fact to all who know her.

She is thoroughly well informed, without pedantry; she has a delightful *naïveté*; and though long since married, she has still the gaiety of a child, loving laughter like a little girl, which does not prevent her from possessing a religious enthusiasm for great objects.

Physically, she has a grace even more beautiful than beauty, which triumphs over a complexion still somewhat brown (she is hardly sixteen!); a nose well formed, but not striking, except in the profile; a charming figure, supple and *svelte*; feet and hands exquisitely formed, and wonderfully small, as I have just mentioned. All these advantages are, moreover, thrown into relief by a proud bearing, full of race, by an air of distinction and ease which all queens have not, and which is now quite lost in France, where everybody wishes to be equal. This exterior—this air of distinction—this look of

a *grande dame*, is one of the most precious gifts which God—the God of women—can bestow on them. The Countess Georges speaks four languages as if she were a native of each of the countries whose tongue she knows so thoroughly. She has a keenness of observation which astonishes me; nothing escapes her. She is besides extremely prudent; and entirely to be relied on in daily intercourse. There are no other words to describe her, but *perle fine*. Her husband adores her; I adore her; two cousins on the point of *old-maidism* adore her—she always will be adored, as fresh reasons for loving her continually arise. I should be very glad to learn that Valentine studies as much as the young Countess, who, besides all her other studies, practises daily at her piano. The success of this education is owing to hard work, which Miss Valentine shuns a little too much. Now, I say to my dear niece, that to do nothing except what we feel inclined to do is the origin of all deterioration, especially in women. Rules obeyed and duties fulfilled, have been the law of the young Countess from childhood, although she is an only child and a rich heiress.

Even now she is like a little child before her mother; she contests for the honour of waiting upon her; she has an English and feudal respect

for her mother; she knows how to combine the greatest love, reverence, tenderness, and familiarity, without infringing on the enormous distance which exists between a mother, who makes us what we are, and a daughter, however perfected, however complete she may be.

The young Countess has never addressed her mother except by '*vous*,' and the problem of combining perfect tenderness with the greatest respect is admirably solved.

This is not a criticism on our manners, it is an attempt to explain the high breeding, the inexplicable manner of Madame Hanska and her daughter, which only exists in *nuances*. Now in France we have suppressed *nuances* and distances; this mixture, this existence of personal dignity together with the performance of humble domestic and religious duties, is no longer to be found among women.

This manner may be acquired more or less by carefully rendering to everyone the respect which is their due, and doing it with graciousness and dignity.

My dear nieces, do not take this as a lecture. I am quite aware of your thorough affection for your parents, who have given you in all its fulness the beautiful poem of childhood, which neither I

nor your mother ever knew, and which your excellent mother vowed she would let you enjoy.

We no longer see whole nations prostrating themselves before social grandeur. In France we have no longer the right to look on ourselves as inferiors, and if no one any longer possesses the air of a *grande dame*, we are all the more under an obligation to cultivate sterling personal worth; it is what will make us a great people, if we do not allow ourselves to give way to *bourgeois vanities*.

Thus I beg Valentine not to exhibit a creole *nonchalance*; but to listen to the advice of her sister, to impose tasks on herself, and to do work of various sorts, without neglecting the ordinary and daily cares of the household, and, above all, constantly to withstand the inclination we all have, more or less, to give ourselves up to what we find pleasant; it is by this yielding to inclination that we deteriorate and fall into misfortune.

Enough of morality, for you are little pests quite capable of thinking I make the pelisses bitter to you. God preserve me from imitating those parents who make their children purchase indulgence by blows, and give moral rhubarb in bread and butter! Nevertheless, I shall tell Sophie again, she must not laugh at Armand.

Armand is the prop of his family, he is the hope of his old aunt, he has taken literature as his profession, he works hard at it. At his age I perhaps did no better; why may he not end by succeeding? Let him work through his failures; they are his instructors; the public will give him blows enough without your help. The part of a woman is to bind up wounds and reanimate failing courage. Armand ought to believe that he writes *chefs-d'œuvre*; alas! I thought 'La Dernière Fée' was an incomparable book; the first loan I ever borrowed went to print the five hundred copies which lay three years in the depths of a warehouse?

Shall I find you still at Paris? . . . I hardly believe it. No doubt you will be in the south. I hope your mother will allow herself to gossip about all this in her next letter.

Try to make your grandmother come often to see you. I am afraid she carries too far the duties she imposes on herself, in looking after the little house in the Rue Fortunée.

Tell me all you think of doing in the south, and if you intend to settle there altogether. . . . As you have taken so much to Art, I must warn you, my little girls, not to make a parade of talent, nor to weary your husband, but employ

it to become a true connoisseur, and to acquire artistic objects of great value, at prices comparatively trifling.

Adieu! my dear little girls, study drawing, and even painting, learn to distinguish painters, to seize their manner, their *method of work*, so as to acquire real knowledge which will guard you from buying little horrors displaying themselves with effrontery in gilded frames which seem to turn yellow with humiliation and disgust.

Adieu! my dear little ones.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: January 1849.

Your letter, dear sister, has caused me great sorrow, by its news of the non-payment by C——.

Affairs cannot prosper in France while no regular government exists; and Louis Napoleon, as Laurent-Jan says, is a ladder by which we may climb out of the sewer of the Republic. For another year yet, business will suffer, and be in suspense in France. God protect us!

I work hard, for I can see nothing bright in the future. I have my friends, with three great lawsuits on their hands. No doubt, we shall go to

St. Petersburg, where these affairs will take them. The Countess will make up her mind to nothing until her children are entirely free from anxieties regarding their fortune. Moreover, your brother's debts, whether his own, or those he has in common with the family, trouble her enormously. Nevertheless, I hope to return towards the end of August; but in no circumstance will I ever again separate myself from the person I love. Like the Spartan, I intend to return with my shield or upon it.

How are you going on in your household? What does Surville think of affairs? How do his bridges succeed?

The alternative before C—— deeply pains me, but whose fortunes are secure in such times as these?

My friends are very uneasy; and I am writing strenuously in order to accumulate a stock of works, for the future terrifies me! How we all regret that house, that wicked *bonbonnière*, that cost four hundred thousand francs! What could not be done to-day with four hundred thousand francs! It is true, one hundred thousand is still owing.

Everything is most discouraging. Only imagine, no money is permitted to be sent out of

this country. Besides the Imperial prohibition, the Jews take fifteen or twenty per cent. on commission, thus even if it were wished, if it could be done, it would still be ruination!

You have no idea of the avidity of the Jews here. Shylock is a mere rogue, an innocent. Remember, this is merely in the matter of exchange; loans are sometimes fifty per cent. even between Jew and Jew!

If Hostein had been able to get Frédéric (who, I am told, has left the Porte-Saint-Martin) to play the 'Faiseur,' all would have been saved, he would have had fifty good representations, besides being able to have the 'Vautrin.' This would have been a great *coup*, but I can see, even at this distance, that he fails in enterprise. Mercadet without Frédéric, or without Regnier, is the ruin of the 'Faiseur.' Maybe when you receive this letter you will be on the eve of this catastrophe, or of a triumph!

May either fortune fall lightly upon you!

To M. Midy de la Greneraye-Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: February 9, 1849.

My dear Surville,—The close of your letter gave me great pain. What you had in view was mag-

nificent! . . . So long as Monarchy, and a strong and powerful monarchy, is not re-established, no business is possible in France.

Besides, I believe a *montagnard* movement is imminent; but I believe it will be the last, and the impossible Republic, which costs us two in particular, and France in general, so much loss and misery, will come to an end.

What will you do, if you miss this affair? The last two days, yesterday and the day before, I have been very sad over your letter. You truly say, I can do nothing here, nor elsewhere, since, so far from having anything of my own, I have a large debt for the person, to whom, in a way, I have lent my name.

Do not think I enjoy tranquillity while thinking of the situation, such as I see it, of my relatives. I am, however, very glad, in the midst of all this annoyance, to have secured a sufficient competence to my mother, to whom I am certain to give peace of mind until I can do better. It is also one anxiety the less for Laura.

The persons with whom I am living are most excellent towards me; but I am still only a guest, a much-cared-for guest and friend, in the true acceptation of the word.

The members of my family are all known here,

and my anxieties are heartily shared, but what can be done against impossibilities ?

Germany is undermined. There is no channel of communication open between Russia and France ; the Emperor has prohibited all transfer of funds from his dominions. The payments we make at Paris cost twelve per cent. on the sums sent, and this even is exceptional, thanks to the friendship existing between the Rothschilds and the Jewish house at Berditchef. Not only is there this double hindrance, but the person in whose house I am, has suffered from two fires in two years. This has been the heaviest blow to our future hopes.

You will tell me, dear friend, to enjoy the quietude and hospitality I find here. Alas! between the affairs of my friends and my own, there is not much quiet left.

I understand misfortunes only too well, having suffered such extraordinary ones.

Very good commercial business might be done here ; but Frenchmen are not allowed to enter the empire. I am, with our Ambassador, the only exception to the order to close the frontier on persons of our nationality. You cannot imagine the immense resources of this vast empire! Russia and England are the only two real powers —England is artificial ; while Russia is positive,

she possesses the raw material of nearly all manufactures.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: February 9, 1849.

My dear Laura,—You are very wrong at your age to attempt to enlighten literary self-love.

Eh! What is it to you, if Armand is, or is not, a genius? I believe if Armand has a vocation, he may become a Clairville, and make his fortune. In literature. persevering mediocrities make a fortune, they gain. an *incognito* and ten thousand livres income. That is worth more than a place. Two hundred out of six hundred dramatic authors are in this condition in Paris. If I had been consulted, I would have proposed this dilemma. Either Armand has genius, or only obstinacy: if he has genius, he will be unlucky, without a farthing, and proud of himself, like all who have genius; if he is obstinate, he will be M. Clairville, M. Anicet, M. de Çamberousse, who earn fifteen or twenty thousand francs a year, by working and grubbing in the dramatic soil.

Was I able to enlighten B——, when he came to Passy, when I tried to show him that French literature is something more than placing French words alongside of one another, that an *idea* is

not a tale, nor a novel; and that a livelihood cannot be earned in literature, except by making a name? As literary *amour propre* seldom believes *experience*, how then can you expect Armand to believe your word alone? Besides, in your position of a mother, having two daughters to provide for, you ought, like Sosia, to be 'friendly to everybody!'

You tell me you think of leaving the Hôtel Rogron, and doubtless taking less expensive apartments. You are right; in these times of crisis, expenses ought to be reduced to simple necessaries. In this I can give myself as an example; whilst I was at Paris I only spent two hundred francs, everything included, even conveyances, and my journeys to Saché. I advise you to search the neighbourhood of Passy, or on the side of l'Étoile, les Ternes, or Chaillot; you will find a set of rooms quite as large as those you have at present, at a reasonable rate. In Surville's place, I would take a single room in a central position, and make it my office. You will thus tide over the crisis.

In the days when I was confining myself to the strictest necessaries at Passy, I managed to reduce all expenses to a franc a head. I only had hot dinners twice a week, Monday and Thursday, and I used to eat the cold meat with

a salad; and I would return to this easily and without grumbling.

I hope your children are well. I know they willnot fail in courage; they will know how to do without many things, for they have a tender father, and a mother such as few possess. Above all, Laura, distrust your imagination, which enlarges evil as well as good. If I had received anything from the theatre for the 'Faiseur,' I could have shared it with you, but we must wait.

Adieu! Do not forget to write, for we must tell even painful things to those who love us, and conceal them from all others. Kiss your children for me, and endeavour to devote yourselves 'aux choses les plus embêtantes de l'économie domestique,' as Flore says, in some piece or other at the 'Variétés.' Here they devote themselves heartily to these things in order that some day there need be no need to consider them.

The friends with whom I live are excellent; they live far from the outer world, on a desert island, with five or six men Fridays, and me for Robinson!

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: March 3, 1849.

I have not heard from you, dear sister, for a long time; when you receive this I shall be already elsewhere, preparing for my departure, which in the present weather is not an easy affair. When the *sledging* ceases, the thaw renders all the roads impracticable, the inundations make every watercourse impassable, since the rivers have no bridges. Winter has not spared us; we have had the cold of 1812. I was seized at Kiev with a fourth cold, from which I suffered long and cruelly; the treatment of the heart and lung was interrupted. I had no strength; the present phase being a weakening of the muscular system of these two organs. In consequence, fits of suffocation are brought on by the slightest cause, even a word spoken loudly. However, this last cold is nearly well, and now we shall try to remedy the muscular atony, otherwise the journey will be very hard.

I know nothing of your affairs, except through the few lines from my mother. You seem to be doing better. I know your young ones are amusing themselves, and even dance sometimes.

I should like to have heard if M—— was at

all these balls, and whether the great affair is near its accomplishment. But grandmamma's silence on this head makes me believe, in spite of all the strange and interminable obstacles I meet with, that the uncle of fifty will pass the young niece, and win the wager. We have been long cut off from the girls' pretty chatter, to our great grief.

I hope to be in Paris either the 15th or the 30th of April, though this depends on many things. The present condition of Galicia offers many serious hindrances to travellers; it is necessary to await the results of measures taken for the security of the roads by the Government. Bands of armed thieves pillage the town in open day, and carry people away. Then, again, the accomplishment of the great affair of my life meets with all sorts of difficulties, unfortunately foreseen and caused by mere formalities, so that although both of us are very impatient to see la Rue Fortunée, the departure is very uncertain.

At the fair of contracts at Kiev, I saw some Persian carpet like the *portière* given me last year by M. H——, and twelve chairs of marvellous workmanship, but they were all of such a price, they had to be given up. We preferred to buy *termolamas* of eternal wear, for Sophie and Valentine; the young Countess has a furred

garment made of *termolama*, which her mother wore in 1830, and it still preserves its colours. I do not know how the Orientals manage to transfuse their sun into stuffs of all kinds. They are a people intoxicated with light. I stayed twenty days in my room; my only amusement being to see Madame Georges Mniszech going to balls in costumes of royal magnificence. No one knows what Russian toilettes are; they are far far beyond any seen in Paris. Most of the women ruin their husbands by their extravagance in dress, and their partners ruin the toilettes of the ladies by their roughness.

In a figure of the Mazurka, in which the lady's handkerchief is contended for, the young Countess's handkerchief worth four or five hundred francs, one of the handsomest in her *corbeille*, which I had admired before her departure, was torn to pieces. The adorable mother has repaired the loss by giving one of the best of her own, which is twice as rich—a little morsel of cambric, enough to take in the end of the nose, all the rest in English point. As these are our great events, you may judge of the rest.

Adieu! *Mille tendresses* to you and your *dumb* daughters, also to Surville, to whom I wish success.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: March 22, 1849.

My dear Laura,—No news can come from a desert; there is nothing to tell but what affects me personally, and that is not favourable.

My affairs are all upset. Therefore I hesitated to write, for why should we afflict ourselves about fatal things which can only be deplored and endured?

I have said nothing about these vexations to my mother, she has already only aggravated them too much, by complicating my situation by a letter in which, for the first time in her life, she addresses me as 'vous.'

You can have known nothing of this, or you would have contrived to prevent it; you, who are so good and conciliating! In my circumstances it was fatal to write me a letter from which logical people could only conclude either a bad son, or a mother of an impracticable and punctilious temper. In short, it was the letter from a mother to a little boy of fifteen, who had done something wrong. And with all that, my mother knows all my affairs, she is my representative. She deserves nothing but praise, and I revere her!

It is almost certain I shall have to go back as

I came; had it not been for the disturbed condition of Galicia, I should have been already on the road. This inopportune letter, in which my poor mother not only does not express one word of tenderness, but ends her letter by declaring that her affection is conditional on my behaviour, (a mother reserving the right to love a son like me, seventy-two years on one side, and fifty on the other!). This letter arrived just at the moment when I was extolling all that my mother had done for me. I could not prevent the observations of an ultra-prudent person who is almost suspicious, and whom this letter immediately concerned. . . . . I tell you, that you may understand the exaggerated proportion taken by foolish things at so great a distance. At the moment when my mother's letter came I had just succeeded in obtaining permission to write to St. Petersburg for the authorisation of the sovereign master, and not only has the master refused his consent, but also, through his minister, he has signified to us that there are laws, and they are to be obeyed.

Wearied with struggle, Madame Hanska has now serious thoughts of sending me to sell everything at the Rue Fortunée. Here, she is rich, beloved, and considered; she has no expenses.

She hesitates to go to a place where she sees nothing but trouble, debts, expenses, and new faces; her children tremble for her! Add to this, the *cold and dignified* letter of a mother who scolds her youngest child (of fifty years), and you will feel that if doubts are expressed about the future, a gentleman must take his departure, give up the property in the Rue Fortunée to her to whom it belongs, resume his pen, and hide himself in a hole like Passy.

Learn, that it is with marriage as it is with cream—a nothing, a change of atmosphere, will turn it. Bad marriages can be made with the utmost ease; good ones require infinite precautions, scrupulous attention, or else no marriage takes place, and I am *en train* to remain a bachelor.

I have, and I always shall have, in Madame Hanska, the best, the most devoted of friends, a friend such as one has but once in a lifetime; her children love me as if I were one of the family, but they cannot bear there should be any uncertainty in the future of a mother so *exactement adorée*, and they are very right.

The wisdom, the good sense, of Madame Hanska cannot be imagined, it is only equal to her information, which is colossal; she is still beautiful, but she has a horror of the world and

of its petty contentions; she likes retirement, quiet, and study.

We are more and more uneasy about the situation of France. I must own that at present Paris is not attractive. What is Surville doing? How are you weathering the storm? In the midst of this calm and untroubled solitude, these thoughts torment me, and my friends who take part in my feelings are as anxious as I am myself.

The Countess Georges Mniszech knows Sophie and Valentine well; she talks about them to me. I have described them, and everybody here takes an interest in them. My nieces ought to have written to me every month. Although every letter costs ten francs, we should all salute the chatter of these pretty parrots with acclamations.

Consider, dear Laura, none of us, are as yet, so to speak, *arrived*; if, instead of being obliged to work in order to live, I had become the husband of one of the cleverest, the best-born, and best-connected of women, who is also possessed of a solid though circumscribed fortune, in spite of the wish of the lady to live retired, to have no intercourse even with the family, I should still be in a position to be much better able to be of use to you all. I have the certainty of the warm kindness

and lively interest which Madame Hanska takes in the dear children. Thus it is more than a duty in my mother, and in all belonging to me, to do nothing to hinder me from the happy accomplishment of a union which *before all is my happiness.* Again, it must not be forgotten, that this lady is illustrious not only on account of her high descent, but from her great reputation for wit, beauty, and fortune, (for she is credited with all the millions of her daughter) ; she is constantly receiving proposals of marriage from men of the highest rank and position. But she is something far better than rich and noble; she is exquisitely good, combined with the sweetness of an angel, and of an easy compatibility in daily life which every day surprises me more and more; she is, moreover, thoroughly pious.

Seeing all these great advantages, the world treats my hopes with something of mocking incredulity, and my prospects of success are denied and derided on all sides. ..

If we were all to live in the same boat or under the same roof I could conceive the difficulties raised by my mother about her dignity; but to keep on the terms which are due to a lady who brings with her (fortune apart) most precious social advantages, I think you need only confine

yourselves to giving her the impression that my relations are kind and affectionate amongst themselves, and kindly affectionate towards the man she loves. It is the only way to excite her interest and to preserve her influence, which will be enormous.

You may all of you, in a grand fit of independence, say you have no need of anyone, that you intend to succeed by your own exertions. But, between ourselves, the events of the last few years must have proved to you, that nothing can be done without the help of others ; and the social forces that we can least afford to dispense with are those of our own family.

Come, Laura, it is something to be able, in Paris, to open one's *salon* and to assemble all the *élite* of society, presided over by a woman who is refined, polished, imposing as a queen, of illustrious descent, allied to the noblest families, witty, well-informed, and beautiful; there is here a power of social domination.

To enter into any struggle whatever with a woman in whom so much influence centres is—I tell you this in confidence—an act of insanity. Let there be neither servility, nor sullen pride, nor susceptibility, nor too much compliance; nothing but good natural affection. This is the line of con-

duct prescribed by good sense towards such a woman. I hardly dare to tell you that these three personages look on me as the embodiment of talent; their faithful admiration has not slackened for the last eight years, and the intimate relations arising from the journeys that we four have made together, the knowledge of my character, my opinions, and my habits have only increased their trust in me. You may fancy I am boasting; but no, it is, I tell you, a fact, which may have its root either in fictions of the heart or in realities. Now, these three dear persons *never forgive* those who wound their feelings with respect to me. This was what I tried to make my mother comprehend in my last letter, which brought down hers upon me, and this last letter has not mended matters. If I had known the contents of her last letter, I should have kept it to myself, for I am free to show or to keep my letters private; but I uttered an exclamation, and said, 'My mother is displeased with me;' hence all the mischief. If you do not wish your letters to be seen, you have only to write '*confidential*' on them.

The friends with whom I am living show me their letters, even those that concern the most private family affairs, but they have as much

respect as affection for me. I am the patriarch of the family, and you must not imagine I am in any kind of bondage. The union which enables us to live as though there were only one heart amongst four of us is only to be equalled by the love we each of us bear the other.

My troubles are troubles to the other three, and when your letter came describing your prospects in such dark colours, my own regret was so heartily shared by the others that for a moment we all forgot their complete helplessness to do anything to assist you. This helplessness arises from the laws, and it is very real. Do not mention what I write to you, but endeavour to make my mother reasonable. For myself, my only desire is for tranquillity and moderate work to enable me to finish 'La Comédie Humaine.' If my hopes here are renewed, I shall found a good house; if they fail entirely, I shall withdraw all that belongs to myself from la Rue Fortunée, and begin my life over again, but this time I should only take a furnished room, so as to be independent of everything, even of furniture. This perspective has in it nothing that alarms me. If I lose all I have hoped to gain here, I should no longer live; a garret in the Rue Lesdiguières and a hundred francs a month would suffice for

all I should want. My heart, my soul, my ambition, all that is within me, desire nothing, except the one object I have had in view for sixteen years. If this immense happiness escapes me, I shall need nothing. I will have nothing. I care nothing for la Rue Fortunée for its own sake; la Rue Fortunée has only been created *for her* and *by her*. I thus await this difficult success, against which all possible hindrances seem to conspire.

If I am not made great by 'La Comédie Humaine,' I shall be by this success, *if it come to pass.*

To Mesdemoiselles Sophie and Valentine Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: April 1849.

My dear little Nieces,—Will you do me the favour to slip into the first letter your mother or your grandmother writes, a clear and well-considered note, clear enough to enable us to make the *moujik* cooks understand; first, the tomato sauce, invented by your mother, without difference from that eaten at your table; second, the onion *purée* Louise used to make for your grandmother. You must understand we are here in a vast desert; and to enable us to swallow a morsel of an ox, which altogether is not worth more than a hundred

francs, or of a sheep, which does not come from Pré-Salé, all the resources and coquettish inventions of Parisian cookery are needed.

Be proud, Sophie and Valentine! by sending these receipts you may be the benefactresses of a country utterly destitute of veal; I mean eatable veal, for cows have calves here, as elsewhere, but these calves are of Republican leanness. Beef, such as is found at Paris, is a myth: it may be remembered in dreams; but, in reality, we have beef twenty years old and so stringy that it helps to increase the size of the bales of hemp intended for exportation!

We console ourselves with excellent tea, and exquisite milk and cream; as to vegetables, they are execrable, the carrots are like radishes, and the turnips are like nothing else. On the other hand, gruels without end have been invented; gruels made of millet, buckwheat, oats, barley, &c. They could make a gruel out of the bark of trees.

Therefore, O my nieces! have pity on this country, so rich in corn, so poor in vegetables. Oh! how Valentine would laugh to see the apples, the pears, the plums! she would laugh for a year.

Adieu, my little girls. Have patience with the

Republic, since you have real beef, real veal, real vegetables, and a good uncle who is very happy, and fed on gruel.

Be always good; write your politics as regards sauces to your uncle.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: April 30, 1849.

My dear Sister,—I have received your letter of the 12th of this month. The children's letter was very pretty, it gave us the greatest pleasure.

I am nailed here by illness. Alas! I have paid tribute to 1848, like others who are either dead or dying of it! My temperament *de taureau* alone affords some thread for Hope, the sovereign of mankind, to hold by; I am one of the Opposition called Life. After the sorrows of February, which sapped both fortune and literature, a hypertrophia of the heart showed itself whilst I was at Saché (keep this from my mother), I could neither walk nor ascend the slightest eminence. Now I cannot go upstairs, and I have been imperatively obliged to put myself in the hands of the doctors.

Luckily, one of the pupils of the famous Franck, the original of my 'Médecin de Campagne,

is here. I have consulted him since my last attack. He and his son recognise a simple hypertrophia; they both agree that they can accomplish my cure. One thing is certain, it would be impossible to travel, without imminent risk, the eight hundred leagues which separate me from Paris, until I am entirely cured. These frightful attacks of suffocation are caused by any contrariety, even by strong emotions. To keep me well, my life ought to be without vexation. Is it to be called living when one must be continually on one's guard against everything, the least expression of feeling, a tone raised above the level, a quickened walk? This horrible illness has within the last fortnight been complicated by the tribute I am paying to the climate. Hitherto I had not suffered from the terrible influences of this Asiatic climate. It is perfectly frightful; I suffer every day from *migraine*; I sleep with perpetual headache. Here, heat and cold, everything, is excessive. The winds that blow from Asia come loaded with matter quite different from those of a European atmosphere. But, as I have said, the two doctors Knothe answer for my recovery; and I must confess that in Paris I should not be so well-cared-for as I am here, where every creature has for me such tender, paternal, filial, sincere

attachment that they can supply the absence of the most loving family.

Enough of myself. But, above everything, *motus!* to my mother, only entreat her in her letters to avoid anything which might cause me pain.

Ah! my poor sister, all the disasters of the Revolution of February are neither known nor ended. This foolish *levée en masse* of the democracy, with Lamartine at its head, has caused much evil to France; it will devour its authors!

Adieu! my dear sister. It is absolutely necessary that I should go to Kiev, to offer my respects to the Governor-General. I cannot hear from you till my return. You have two charming little girls, whose letters are the delight of the young Countess Anna.

Thanks for the news of Henry.

Write on thicker paper, for I can scarcely read your letters.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: June 21, 1849.

My dear Laura,—I have delayed my answer to you nearly a fortnight. I have had a terrible crisis.

I was six days in bed, and six days convalescent. It seems it was a violent rebellion of

my illness against my excellent constitution. Now, that I am risen from my bed of suffering, I can certify that the symptoms of the affection of the heart have disappeared. I can go upstairs, walk, and lie flat. Without, however, trusting to this improvement, the doctor wishes to finish his work, and make altogether a new man of me. This will take another month. He is a very great physician, entirely *unpublished.* He does justice to the French physicians, as the first in the world for diagnosis; but he considers them (with rare exceptions), altogether ignorant of therapeutics, that is, in the knowledge of curative remedies. Soulié died of this same illness caused by excess of work.

What gratitude do I not owe to this physician! He delights in violins; once more in Paris, I must find a real Stradivarius to give him.

June 25.

This letter not having been given to the Cossack despatched to Berditchef, to meet the last courier, I take it up again to-day. Alas! I have no good news to send.

In all that regards the affection, the tenderness of all, the desire to root out the evil weeds which encumber the path of my life, mother and children are sublime; but the chief matter of all is still subject to entanglements and delays, which make

me doubt whether it is God's will that your brother should ever be happy, at least in that way; but as regards sincere mutual love, delicacy, and goodness, it would be impossible to find another family like this. We live together as if there were only one heart amongst the four—this is repetition, but it cannot be helped, it is the only definition of the life I lead here.

The letters of your young ones cause an indescribable pleasure here; their ways, their kind of beauty, their intelligence, have all been divined from their style of writing. It is their letters which are called for whenever I receive a packet directed by you. If ever the Countess Anna should come to Paris, she will often invite them to accompany her to the Italiens, to the Opera, and to the Opéra Comique; but is not Paris menaced with the approaching loss of these two *petits quinquins?* You have indeed shed balm into my heart by what you tell me. Surville has piloted his bark well.

Write to me; above all, write quickly, and tell me all news, good or bad. I wonder which of us, in this race of ill-luck, will be the first to be rid of his evil fortune?

This morning, when taking my citron, I had a crisis, which obliges me to give up this remedy.

I cannot stand it, and yet, strangely enough, I like it. Do you know I am writing to you at two o'clock in the morning? Day is breaking, and I am beginning not to know what I am writing, therefore I will say adieu!

A thousand regards to Surville; embrace the children for me; as for yourself, dear Laura, I send you the (alas!) old affections of your poor brother, whose heart is always the same, though made anew by the doctor of the Ukraine.

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: October 20, 1849.

My dear Sister,—If you are surprised at the delay of this letter, you will be very sorry to learn the cause; only, as you love your mother and your brother, do not say a word of this to my mother, to whom it would be a terrible blow. I have had what the doctor calls an intermittent cephalalgic fever; it is dreadful! He feared at each attack it would become brain fever. The last attack was three days ago; the fever has lasted altogether thirty-four days. I am as thin as in 1819; however, there is still *un peu de ventre*, for I had a good deal, and that is always the last refuge of *embonpoint* when attacked by illness. At last, the fever yielded to six doses of

quinine daily, mixed with I know not what. The fevers of this country are celebrated; when one has once caught Moldavian fever, it leaves its traces for life. Remember Labois, who caught it at Odessa, and became the shadow of his former self. Of course, the journey to Moscow has been given up. I am writing to you the first day of convalescence. The fever is at an end; but the lungs and the heart have regained all the bad symptoms which the doctor's treatment had stopped, for during this fever that treatment had to be suspended. It will take at least two months, November and December, to put me in a condition to travel with safety. In fact, even in November there is no travelling unless sleighing is possible, that is to say, if the snow is thick enough to allow of travelling by sleighs. Sleighing is not safe before January, for you may imagine what becomes of equipages in a *thaw*. Winter must, therefore, be well set in before one dare venture to risk oneself. The carpet of snow, six feet in thickness, must be stretched from Berditchef to Cracow, a distance of 250 leagues. This is why, instead of reaching Paris in November, as I expected, I cannot be there till the end of January. Also, since my illness seized me, it has been necessary to obtain permission to prolong

my sojourn here for six months. I had permission only for one year, and the term was expiring. Tell my mother that if I do not return, it is doubtless because I have reason to hope for a happy conclusion of my journey, and you will not be altogether wrong. Tell her that perhaps things are going better than I represented; in short, say anything you like, so that she is not allowed to have any suspicion of the real fact. Then put it into the head of my mother and of Sophie (who has left two blank pages in her letter), that when one is 750 leagues away it is better not to write to one at all, or not to send blank paper; 1, because of the enormous price of blank paper; 2, because of the enormous profit there is in written paper both to the heart and to the purse. When postage was dear—the English, who think of profit before all things—used to write twice over the same sheet of paper, down and across.

If here we do not write twice across the same sheet, I am sure we read our letters twice over. but that is not the same thing. Sophie has traced out a catechism of what she considers *my duties* towards you, just as last year my mother wrote me a catechism of my duties towards my nieces; it is a sort of cholera peculiar to our family, to lecture uncles both at home and abroad. I make

fun of it, but all these little things are remarked upon, which I do not like; then these blank pages make me furious. I forgive Sophie on account of the *motif*, which is you, and for all she and Valentine have done for your *fête*. Ah, if my wishes are ever realised, how I shall enjoy introducing my dear nieces, both so unspoiled by the devil! I have sung their praises here. If I have said that Sophie is a great musician; I add, Valentine is a *man of letters*, and she is tired with writing three pages!

21st.

I have just written a long letter to Madame Delannoy, with whom I have settled my business; but this still leaves me with obligations of conscientiousness towards her, which my first book will acquit. No one could have behaved more like a mother, more adorable than she has been throughout all this business. She has been a mother, I will be a son.

Now I have only to close my business with Dablin in the same way.

Would you like to know what stewards have to look after in Russia? For twenty-five years the Countess has had the accounts balanced from one estate alone, which is laid out in farms, and it now brings in twenty-eight thousand francs

rent. Labour is wanted in this country, which is another Beauce for fertility. The ground is never manured, then what happens? This year there was a splendid crop of wheat, a grass stronger than the wheat appeared, choked it, and grew in its stead. I saw the grass, it reached above my head, with golden empty ears; it has destroyed six-tenths of the harvest. This plant has had the same effect as locusts.

During my illness I have had a *robe de chambre* which must for ever supersede the white Carthusian dressing-gowns; it is a dressing-gown of *termolama*.

Now I ought to tell you that this Persian or Circassian stuff has been my dream and desire ever since 1834, when it was revealed to me at Geneva for the first time. I then imagined that queens alone could wear it. It is a fabric entirely of silk, and in its tissue it presents all the marvellous work of an Indian cashmere. It is the shawl executed in silk, only it is more brilliant. It lasts for years, one feels clothed as with the sun. It is both warm and light. My *termolama* is a black ground, *semé* with palm leaves pressed flat, and surrounded with flowers of admirable delicacy, flecked with gold. It is hand-made, and resembles Venice brocade, as the brocaded part is worked

in gold and silver. My illness has made a child of me. I had one of those feelings of delight which one can only experience when one is eighteen, and only at eighteen when one feels as if one were only twelve.

I walked about in the glory of my palms, like a Sultan, and I am now writing to you in the said *termolama.* The Cairite Jews only bring this stuff made up into *robes de chambre,* for no European manufacture could stand before it; so one can have it in nothing else. I have groaned not to be able to *arm* Sophie and Valentine with a *termolama.* The Polish women wear it either as a *robe de chambre* or as a pelisse. Each lady here has her *termolama.* I think this fabric must have existed in the days of Abraham.

The servant who looks after me married lately, and he and his wife came to salute their masters. The woman and the man each laid themselves flat, and struck the ground three times with their foreheads, and kissed our feet. The act of prostrating oneself is known only in the East. It is only there that the word Power has a significance. One ought to reign like the Emperor of Russia, or let it alone altogether. A man brought some things here from Viezniovicz, and he wished his masters *a happy reign.*

Michael Koributh, whose possessions were divided between the Rzevuski and Mniszech families, owned, during the reign of Louis XIV., the whole of the Ukraine, all Podolia, all Volhynia, besides estates in Galicia; in all, three times the extent of France of to-day. His descendants in the female line now possess, of all this, only a few villages!... How families decay! The Countess Anna and her husband have brought from Viezniovicz the *morning gift* of Marina Mniszech, the Czarina, whose trousseau (the details of which exist in their archives) contained a peck and a half of pearls, and *six chemises.* Their uncle was the last King of Poland. Madame Geoffrin sold her pictures to him. They have brought for Madame Hanska the most beautiful Greuze I ever saw, done by Greuze for Madame Geoffrin; two Watteaus, also painted for Madame Geoffrin. These three pictures are worth eighty thousand francs.

With these are two admirable portraits by Lely[1] (?)—*James II. and his first wife*; a Vandyke, a Cranach, a Mignard—all sublime pictures; three Canalettis, bought by the King from Rigzonico, three by Rothari, more beautiful even

[1] In the original, *Leslie*; possibly Balzac meant Lely. Leslie was *alive* in 1849.

than the Greuze; in all, twenty first-class pictures. The Countess already possesses a Vandyke bought from the painter by her great-great-grandfather, a Rembrandt, &c.

What pictures! . . . The Countess Georges wishes the three Canalettis to be in my gallery; the Watteaus, the Greüze, and the two best Rotharis are to be in the *marqueterie salon*, which now only needs two low vases in malachite, and two flagons, to be complete.

Ah! there are two Van Huysums, which, if covered with diamonds would still be under their value. What treasures in these great Polish houses! It is fearful to see how treasures elbow barbarism in them!

Well, good-bye. I gossip like a convalescent. *Mille amitiés*, and best wishes for the prosperity of your husband. I kiss my nieces; as to yourself, your *fête* is celebrated each day in my heart, thou old companion of my youth, both in good and evil days. Adieu! Pray be less concise.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Frapesle.

Berditchef: November 1849.

My very dear and good Madame Zulma,—My nieces and my sister, at two different times, have

given very sad news of you. If I have not written, it is because I could not. I very nearly died, like poor Soulié; a terrible affection of the heart struck me, the foundation of which was laid by my fifteen years of hard labour. I have been eight months under the hands of a doctor, who, in the midst of the Ukraine, finds himself a great physician attached to the palace and estate of my friends.

The treatment has been interrupted by one of those Moldavian fevers which come from the marshes of the Danube to Odessa and ravage the steppes.

'Two days ago a letter from my nieces came. It said you hope to keep Frapesle, but that you are selling the estate. These words, 'Frapesle,' 'Madame Carraud,' awakened all my remembrances with such intensity that although all work is forbidden, even letter-writing, I must tell you how and why I have written no more than a few business letters since *February* last, so that you may not believe true friends are disappearing. I have never ceased to think of you, to love you, and to speak of you even here, where Borget has been known since 1833! . . .

How different life appears seen from the eminence of fifty years! You remember at Frapesle,

when I sent Madame Desgrès to sleep! I believe I have sent many to sleep since! How many things, how many illusions, have been thrown overboard! What rapidity in the hatching of evil! What obstacles in the way of happiness!

The mansion in which I am staying is like an islet in an ocean. The ocean is corn, and steppes of Asiatic extent; but in this mansion you are often mentioned, the more as time failed us to see you at Bourges. We arrived at nine in the evening, and we left at two P.M. the next day, having seen the cathedral, Jacques-Cœur, and the Filles-Bleues. Besides, try, if you can, to get women dressed in travelling costume to visit another woman, and she unknown, without all the splendours of the toilette! . . . One of these two ladies is now married, and is the little sovereign of fifteen thousand souls. She is happy; some people ought to be happy, in order that we may know what happiness is, here below.

Allons, adieu! The Cossack is starting with the letters for Berditchef. I have only time to embrace you from eight hundred leagues' distance. *Mille amitiés* to the Commandant and to Borget. Tell me your projects. A thousand affectionate thoughts from your devoted.

What has become of Périollas? Where is he?

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia : November 29, 1849.

My dear Sister,—Your last letter, received two days ago, gave me great delight. At last I see an end to your troubles, in which we deeply sympathise here. With what impatience we await the letter of December 20 next, to know if the affair is definitively settled!

I should like to see your house rebuilt, to convert it into a good house of business. With this property and a pretty country place in Touraine, you would have a respectable and pleasant existence. It is high time, for your husband has worked enormously. Here I am, fifty-one in a few months. I wish for the same small, easy existence. Alas! even in the case of a *happy result*, much economy must be practised before this can be obtained. I know now what it is to have *one's own house!*

I am going on again with the treatment for my heart. Our doctor is a great man lost in Vierzschovnia. Like many other men of genius, he cares little for the art in which he excels, and only exercises it unwillingly. He is a collector of violins, weapons, and children; of these natural productions he has many. His eldest

son is a doctor, who pursues his profession with ardour, and promises to be a great physician. As a physician the father has invented *powders* taken in wafers; the effects are miraculous. At Paris I should have died, like Soulié. Our Parisian physicians are too much occupied to take such minute precautions; above all, they have a preconceived idea that affections of the heart are incurable; besides, they altogether ignore prescribing according to *temperament.* The doctor keeps the composition of his powders so profound a secret that he does not even confide it to his son. He has thoroughly cured people worse than myself. At this moment I can go up the twenty steps to my rooms, but three steps more would be too much.

Ah! no one knows what an extreme Asiatic climate is until they have to endure it! My dear friends have had a thousand misfortunes this year. For example, during a storm, in which it thundered only twice, a flash of lightning struck a mill a short distance from the mansion, and burnt it down in five minutes before my eyes. Also, there is no harvest. The wheat was choked up, no one knows why, by a barren grass resembling wheat. This phenomenon is not peculiar to this country; it has afflicted all Germany.

You should be proud of your two children, they have written two charming letters, which have been much admired here. Two such daughters are the reward of your life; you can afford to accept many misfortunes. It is the same with Madame Hanska and myself. The gift of her affection explains all my sorrows, my annoyances, my labours; I paid in advance to misfortune the price of such a treasure. Napoleon said 'Everything is paid for here below, nothing is stolen.' I even consider myself to have paid very little. Twenty-five years of labour and struggle are as nothing, to acquire so radiant, so splendid, so perfect an attachment. Here are fourteen months that I have been here in a desert—for a desert it is—and the time seems to have passed like a dream, without one hour of weariness, without one discussion, and that, after five years' travelling together and sixteen full years of intimate acquaintance. The only anxieties we have had have arisen from our health and from matters of business. It is true that the Countess Anna and Count Georges are two ideal perfections; I did not believe two such beings could exist. There is a nobleness of life and sentiment, a gentleness of manners, an evenness of temper, which cannot be believed unless you

had lived with them. With all this, there is a playfulness, a spontaneous gaiety, which dispels weariness or monotony. Never have I been so thoroughly in my right place as here. I never think about Paris, nor about France, but I think of you, of my mother, of my nieces, of Surville, wishing you all the good things you can desire. The children ought to write their little chatter to us every fortnight.

Mille amitiés to Surville, whose efforts I admire.

I hope to be in Paris the end of January; my affairs there require it, but those here overpower everything.

The story about Laurent-Jan, as related by Valentine, made me laugh; he is too well-informed, and has too much intellect and real worth, not to feel that at some period life becomes serious, and that the boyish tricks of the *atelier* however witty and amusing they may be, are not becoming at our age. I like him very much, and he pretends to ignore it. Remember me to him, and say I count upon him thoroughly for all my theatre work, which I wish to share with him.

To Mesdemoiselles Sophie and Valentine Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: November 1849.

My dear little Kittens,—Your letters give me pleasure, and if you were obedient nieces (for you are a production of the great female emancipation of 1830, and you only do what you like) you would write every fortnight to your uncle, and gossip with all the grace which characterises you. Only, Miss Sophie, spare me compliments, pray do not talk of my works nor of my *talents*; talk about yourselves, tell us your ideas, and how you see things. Your letters have the honour to be read in public, and are discussed like a *pâté de Strasbourg*, without any wicked comparison whatever with geese.

I observe with extreme satisfaction you have kept your gaiety and your *philosophie Valentinoise*, in the midst of the present anxieties; this must be a great happiness to the 'authors of your days.' My dear little girls, you ought to do everything possible to soften the troubles which the execrable Revolution of 1848 has brought upon them, and upon so many other families. You have a father and mother such as few possess; they made your

childhood what childhood should be, a poem of tenderness.

The young Countess Anna takes the greatest interest in your chatter; you are like two nightingales, coming by post, who enchant our solitude. Make, then, our pleasure more frequent, allow yourselves four, eight, pages every fortnight; above all, use thicker paper, as it is difficult to decipher your letters. On the other hand, your uncle will give you all possible pleasure at Paris. In short, you are becoming quite *Sévignéenne*; if you do not make a reputation at Paris, you will have a colossal one in the Ukraine, where they begin to talk of Mesdemoiselles Sophie and Valentine.

I hope you will read this letter in your dressing-gowns; I am afraid if you are in your stays, you will swell beyond all bounds.

Adieu! dear little ones. Count on the constant interest and tenderness of your uncle.

To M. Laurent-Jan, Paris.

Berditchef: December 10, 1849.

My dear Laurent,—A long and cruel illness, which seized me in the middle of last winter, prevented me writing anything except on pressing affairs, and strict family duties.

If I can get back to Paris in two months I shall be very glad; but that time at least will be required before my cure can be completed.

I have, alas! paid heavily for the excess of work to which I gave myself up, especially during the last ten years; but we will not speak of that.

Well, about the beginning of February next I shall be at Paris, with the firm wish to work as a member of the 'Société des Auteurs Dramatiques.' During my long hours of illness I discovered more than one little theatrical California; but nothing can be done here. It is impossible to send MSS. of any size. The frontiers are closed in consequence of the war, and no foreigner will henceforth be admitted. Therefore we must wait till I return before we can do more than talk. I am sure there is great suffering at home in art and literature.

Is not everything lying fallow? Shall I find a cheerful public in February 1850?

But courage! let only my health return, and I will embark boldly on the dramatic galley; may I be preserved from grounding on oyster-banks!

My friend, I repeat, all good fortune is built up by courage and industry. I have seen many evil days; but by dint of courage, and especially by hope, I have always struggled through.

A learned personage is here, just returned from Armenia, having discovered the Jews of Moses, *pur sang*, in Kurdistan.

Mille amitiés.

To Madame de Balzac, Suresnes.

Vierzschovnia: January 26, 1850.

I received, my dear mother, your letter of January 3 this evening. The twenty-three days it has been on the road will explain the state of the roads, which are altogether impracticable, owing to the rigour of the season; we have thirty degrees of cold, with wind which makes it equal to sixty.

If the cold holds, we shall set off in two days for Kiev, where we must stay about fourteen or fifteen days.

My dear mother, if you want anything for yourself, do not hesitate to say so, as we wish you to have all possible comforts. The word *omnibus* has troubled me much, at your age, in your condition of health. When you go to dine with Laura, but especially when you go out about my business, take a carriage. I hope soon by my work to enable you to have always a nice little carriage, whenever you do not wish to walk.

A thousand loving things from your obedient and affectionate Son.

To Madame de Balzac, Suresnes.

Vierzschovnia: February 28, 1850.

My dear Mother,—Two days ago I received your letter of the 11th inst. Alas! the journey to Kiev has been fatal to my health. On the second day after my arrival, whilst I was paying my visits to the authorities, a terrible and pestiferous gust of wind, called *chasse-neige*, which comes up the stream of the Dnieper, perhaps from the shores of the Black Sea, seized me, although I was enveloped in furs without a single place unguarded, and I caught the most atrocious cold I ever had in my life. I had four days of fever, and I never left my room for twenty days. The throat and lungs were all attacked. It is not over yet. Decidedly, my nature refuses to be acclimatised. This country is impossible for nervous organisations. There is no need to tell you how thin and weak I have become. Now, when can I leave? It is impossible to say. First, Galicia is full of bands of armed brigands, who, according to sure accounts, are making raids in broad daylight. You will have seen in the 'Débats' that martial law is proclaimed round Cracow, and that troops are employed to put down these brigands. It is absolutely necessary to wait till order is restored.

Then there is still the thaw to be waited for When it thaws, the roads become impassable, and then we must wait till the ground becomes firm; besides, my baggage ought to precede me by ten days, as I must find it at Radzivilof, to send it on from the Austrian Custom-house to the French frontier by waggon. It is sanguine to think I could set off on March 15, and in that case I should arrive early in April. But if my long-cherished hopes are realised, there would be a delay of some days, as I should have to go to Kiev, to have my passport regulated.

These hopes have become possibilities; these four or five successive illnesses—the sufferings of a period of acclimatisation—which my affection has enabled me to take joyfully, have touched this sweet soul more than the few little debts which remain unpaid have frightened her as a prudent woman, and I foresee that all will go well. In the face of this happy probability, the journey to Kiev is not to be regretted, for the Countess has nursed me heroically without once leaving the house, so you ought not to afflict yourself for the little delay which will thus be caused. Even in that case my or our arrival would be in the first fortnight of April. Thus, dear mother, whatever happens, when this letter reaches you, there will

be only one month to expect my return. I hope the journey will set me up, and that I shall not be so thin as I am at this present; but as for the complaint of the heart, it continues, and I must return to have it radically cured by him who has undertaken it.

Your affectionate and dutiful Son.

To Madame de Balzac, Suresnes.

Berditchef: March 11, 1850.

My dear Mother,—At last here I am at Berditchef, where all is ready for the affair of which you know. I shall not write to you about it till I am at Vierzschovnia, after all is over. Here, as elsewhere, these things are never certain until one leaves church after the ceremony. I entreat you to observe the greatest discretion—it is as necessary at Paris as it is here. If all goes well, the event will take place on the 14th instant at seven o'clock in the morning. We shall set off the same day for Vierzschovnia, where we shall remain ten days to settle some important affairs; then we shall go to Kiev to arrange about passports; so that we shall not be fairly on our road before April 1, and it will take more than eighteen days for the journey.

Now, dear mother, pay great attention to the following request.

I wish Madame Honoré to find the house looking its best, with flowers in all the *jardinières*; and as these must be fresh, I will write from Frankfort to say what day you are to put in the flowers.

It is a surprise I am preparing; I have said nothing about it here.

These are what should be filled: 1, the *jardinière* in the entrance hall; 2, the one in the Japanese drawing-room; 3, the two in the cupola room; 4, put some small Cape heaths into the two tiny *jardinières* on the chimney-piece of the grey cupola room; 5, the two large *jardinières* on the two staircase landings; 6, some little heaths in the two bowls which were mounted by Feuchères.

Adieu! dear mother. In four days I shall write more fully. I can only write now about the flowers; let them be *de belles, belles fleurs.*

Mille respectueuses tendresses.

To Madame de Balzac, Suresnes.

Vierzschovnia: March 15, 1850.

My very dear Mother,—Yesterday, at seven in the morning, thanks be to God, my marriage

was blessed and celebrated in the Church of St. Barbara, at Berditchef, by the deputy of the Bishop of Jitomir. Monseigneur wished to have married me himself, but being unable, he sent a holy priest, the Count Abbé Czarouski, the eldest of the glories of the Polish Roman Catholic Church, as his representative.

Madame Eve de Balzac, your daughter-in-law, in order to make an end of all obstacles, has taken an heroic and sublimely maternal resolution, viz., to give up all her fortune to her children, only reserving an annuity to herself.

The time of my return is now certain: it depends on another journey to Kiev, to put my passport *en règle*, by inserting the name of my wife. We shall have ten days here, in which to pack up all the things we wish to send to Paris, in four or five great cases, which should start ten days before us; as, otherwise, we should be obliged to wait for them at the frontier, where they will have to be soldered up for transit.

There are now two of us to thank you for all the good care you have taken of our house, as well as to testify to you our respectful *tendresses*.

Accept the expression of my respect and filial attachment.

To Madame Surville, Paris.

Vierzschovnia: March 15, 1850.

My dear Sister,—Yesterday, at Berditchef, in the parish church of St. Barbara, a delegate of the Bishop of Jitomir, a holy and virtuous priest, resembling in all respects our Abbé Hinaux, the confessor of the Duchesse d'Angoulême, blessed and celebrated my marriage. Thus, for the last twenty-four hours there has been a Madame Eve de Balzac, *née* Countess Rzevuska, or a Madame Honoré de Balzac, or a Madame de Balzac the elder. This is no longer a secret, as you see I tell it you without delay.

The witnesses were, the Countess Mniszech, the son-in-law of my wife, the Count Gustave Olizar, brother-in-law of the Abbé Count Czarouski, the envoy of the Bishop; and the curé of the parish of Berditchef. The Countess Anna accompanied her mother, both exceedingly happy.

This is, as you know, a marriage of pure affection, as Madame Eve de Balzac has given up all her fortune to her children, the Count Georges being, perhaps, better to her than many sons are to their mother.

Notwithstanding all our efforts, we still have some debts; thus I shall have to work with a will.

By 1852 at the latest we have the certainty that we shall at least live at ease in our household. The sixty thousand francs paid into the Great Northern Railway (of France) is what has so much hampered us. I say *we*, for we have been *fiancés* since 1846 at Strasburg. However, at last we have come to the end of the sacrifices offered to the modern idol,[1] the railway!

As to Madame de Balzac, what more can I say about her? I may be envied for having won her; with the exception of her daughter, there is no woman in this land who can compare with her. She is indeed the diamond of Poland, the gem of this old illustrious house of Rzevuska.

I hope in a short time you will see her, as before the month of May I shall present you with your sister-in-law. She wishes henceforth to live only for her children and for me. She has bravely divested herself of every object in life, with the exception of these three beings. Unfortunately, for several years past she has suffered from one of the most painful affections, an arthritic gout which affects the lymph, and of which her mother died; but it may be still be cured. The feet and hands swell so much that she can neither walk nor move

[1] In France.

her fingers. There is a certainty of cure for her in Paris: as there she can take exercise, which is not possible here for six months of the year; and she can follow the treatment already prescribed by Chélius of Heidelberg and Hédenius of Dresden. It is high time to set to work to restore her to the real youth which is her due, for she has the exterior beauty of youth. I hope we shall be on our road in a fortnight and our journey will take about the same time or a little more.

Your brother Honoré at the height of happiness. A thousand regards to Surville and to my nieces. Sophie owes me a wedding present—the price of our wager.

To Madame Zulma Carraud, Nohant en Graçay (Cher).

Vierzschovnia: March 17, 1850.

I put off till to-day replying to your kind and adorable letter. We are such old friends, you must not hear from anyone else the news of the happy ending of this grand and beautiful soul-drama which has been going on for sixteen years.

Three days ago I married the only woman I have ever loved, whom I love more than ever, and whom I shall love to my life's end. I believe

this is the reward God has kept in store for me through so many years of labour, of difficulties endured and surmounted. I had neither a happy youth nor a blooming spring; I shall have the most brilliant summer and the sweetest of all autumns. Perhaps, from this point of view, my most happy marriage will seem to you like a personal consolation, showing as it does that Providence keeps treasures in store to bestow on those who endure to the end.

I will not speak of your letter, it has caused me as much admiration as sorrow. That is all I can say about it, but it has gained for you the sincerest of friends in the person of my wife, from whom I have had no secrets for a long time past, and she has long known you, by all the instances of your greatness of soul, which I have told her, also by my gratitude for your treasures of hospitality towards me. I have described you so well, and your letter has so completed your portrait, that now you are felt to be a very old friend. Also, with the same impulse, with one voice, and with one and the same feeling in our hearts, we offer you a pleasant little room in our house in Paris, in order that you may come there absolutely as if it were your own house. And what shall I say to you? You are the only creature to whom

we could make this offer, and you must accept it, or you would deserve to be unfortunate, for you must remember that I used to go to your house, with the sacred unscrupulousness of friendship, when you were in prosperity, and when I was struggling against all the winds of heaven, and overtaken by the high tides of the equinox, drowned in debts. I have it now in my power to make the sweet and tender reprisals of gratitude. *Certes*, if you were not in heart and soul a woman like whom there are few, it is not exactly thus that I should act. What I am now exacting from you would be misunderstood; you and I ought to understand each other by this time. Well, dear friend, you love elegance because it is the poetry of things, and not, like most Parisians, for the sake of vanity. To you it is as necessary to see the flowers you love so much, as it is to breathe. If you were to be deprived of this grace of life, you would, become as I should, like a singer who had retired from the stage, and who delights to make an *extra* to enable you once more to see what you adore.

Come, then, come from time to time to see your child, and to breathe the air of Paris, of art, of elegance, to converse with congenial people and refresh your soul by intercourse with two hearts

who love you, the one because you have been a good and gentle friend—the other, because you have been all this to me. You will have some days' happiness every three months; come more frequently, if you will; but you are to come, that is settled.

I did this in the old times. At St. Cyr, at Angoulême, at Frapesle, I renewed my life for the struggle; there I drew in fresh strength; there I learned to see all that was wanting in myself; there I obtained that for which I was thirsty. You will learn for yourself how sweet was that consolation; you will learn for yourself all that you have unconsciously been to me, to me a toiler who was misunderstood, overwhelmed for so long under misery, both physical and moral. Ah! I do not forget your motherly goodness, your divine sympathy with those who suffer.

Thus, whilst thinking of all your worth, of the bravery with which you wrestle with adversity, I, who have so often measured my strength with this rude adversary, I tell you that I shall feel ashamed of my own happiness whilst I know that you are in sorrow; but you and I are both of us above these littlenesses. We know and can say that fortune and misfortune are conditions of life where great souls feel their vitality; as much

moral vigour is wanted under the one condition as under the other. The misfortune which has true friends is perhaps easier to endure than a good fortune which is envied. I recognised myself in the life you are leading at Nohant, and if it brought tears to our eyes, I was also proud of you. There again you do good, as you used to do good at Frapesle. You will be blessed—come, you have been blessed here. Well, then, as soon as you wish to come to Paris, you will come without even letting us know.

You will come to the Rue Fortunée exactly as to your own house, absolutely as I used to go to Frapesle. I claim this as my right.

I recall to your mind what you one day said to me at Angoulême, when broken down after writing 'Louis Lambert,' ill, and as you know fearing lest I should go mad. I spoke of the neglect to which these unhappy ones are abandoned. 'If you were to go mad, I would take care of you.' These words, your look, and your expression have never been forgotten. All this is still living in me now, as in the month of July 1832.

It is in virtue of that word that I claim your promise to-day, for I have almost gone mad with happiness.

I heartily wish that this letter, which is only an effusion of gratitude, may, at the distance of eight hundred leagues from here, do you all the good which the few, the very few marks of interest which I received in former times, from your friend Borget amongst others, have done to me—those flowers of affection which sometimes pass away so quickly, but which with me are for you eternal.

When I have been questioned here about my friendships, you have been named the first. I have described that fireside always burning, which is called Zulma, and you have two sincere woman-friends (which is an achievement), the young Countess Mniszech and my wife.

Farewell, then, for a short time, as I start in a few days.

Find in this letter all the tendernesses of an old affection. A thousand regards to the Commandant, and my remembrances to the good Borget.

Your friend.

To Madame de Balzac, Suresnes.

Vierzschovnia: April 2, 1850.

My dear Mother,—The cases intended to travel by waggon have only left to-day; they will

take more than twelve days to reach Radzivilof, in consequence of the general thaw just set in.

I have had a severe relapse in my heart and lungs. We have lost much of the ground lately gained; the twelve days I stay here will be employed by the doctor in putting me into a condition to travel.

Send the enclosed letter to our good Madame Delannoy. I did not forget her; but I caught an ophthalmia at Kiev; my eyes have a black spot which has not yet disappeared, it covers all objects, and still prevents me from writing. To-day I make the first attempt.

We thank you from our hearts for all you are doing. We look forward to the moment when we shall be able to relieve you from the burthen you have borne for the last twenty months. Adieu! my dear mother; I hope this month will not end before I have seen you again and embraced you. Alas! my health has much need of my native air; I hope much from it for my wife also, whose health is in a deplorable state.

A thousand kind things to Laura and my dear little nieces, of whom I ask assistance in the matter of neckties. As to you, I embrace you heartily, as your devoted Son.

To Madame de Balzac, Suresnes.

Vierzschovnia: April 15, 1850.

My dear Mother,—I can hardly see to write to you. I have an affection of the eyes which will not allow me to read or write; it is partly the consequence of a *coup d'air*, and partly a result of my treatment, for the doctor is not alarmed. I should not even have mentioned it; but we are detained here by the prevailing epidemic, measles, which has attacked the young Countess, our dear child!

Our luggage has already started; it ought to arrive at the frontier to-day. We shall begin our journey as soon as the health of our dear Anna gives no further anxiety to her mother.

Moreover, the doctor wishes to continue his remedies at least six days longer. I am not going on well as regards my heart or my lungs; every movement suffocates me.

Adieu! my dear mother.

A thousand affectionate things to Laura and her dear children. My regards to Surville. Oh! my poor eyes that were so good!

To Madame Laure Surville, Paris.

Dresden: May 11, 1850.

This date, dear Laura, will tell you of many traveller's catastrophes. We have taken a whole month to go a distance usually done in six days. Not once, but a hundred times a day, our lives have been in danger. We have often been obliged to have fifteen or sixteen men, with levers, to get us out of the bottomless mudholes into which we had sunk up to the carriage-doors. At last, we are here, alive, but ill and tired. Such a journey ages one by ten years, for you can imagine what it is to fear to kill each other, or to be killed the one by the other, loving each other as we do.

My wife feels grateful for all you say about her, but her hands do not permit her to write.

As to my mother, I consulted Dr. Nacquart about her long ago, and he told me that what she suffered from was merely nervousness—her attacks of languor are only a fresh form of this malady—and a slight gouty tendency.

I rely on you to make my mother understand that she must not be at the Rue Fortunée when we arrive: it is right that my wife should go to visit my mother in her own house, and pay her respects. This once done, she may show herself

in all her devotedness; but her dignity would be compromised in the midst of all the unpacking, in which she would insist on helping us.

She may put the house in order, flowers and all, for the 20th; and let her sleep either at your house, or she might go to Suresnes to her own house. The second day after my arrival I will come to present her daughter-in-law.

Adieu! In nine or ten days I hope to see you, and I must spare my eyes. A thousand regards to Surville.

To M. Louis Véron, Director of the 'Constitutionnel,' Paris.

Dresden: May 11, 1850.

My dear Véron,—One gets married at seven hundred and fifty leagues from Paris. In a country governed despotically, one might think oneself secure from pillage, but behold, I am pillaged, injured in consideration, and betraved like a king.[1]

The enclosed letter will show you how furious I am; I beg you will insert it in the 'Constitutionnel' as soon as it reaches you.

Excuse this scrawl; I am suffering from a

[1] An announcement of the representation of *Vautrin* had been made without the consent of Balzac.

nervous illness which has attacked my eyes and my heart. I am in a dreadful condition for a newly married man. But in this miserable affair there is one consolation, it enables me to recall myself to your kind remembrance during my journey.

Oh! what beautiful things there are here! I am already in for a toilette of twenty-five to thirty thousand francs, a thousand times more beautiful than the Duchess of Parma's. The goldsmiths of the Middle Ages were far superior to those of our time, and I have discovered some magnificent pictures. If I stay here, not a farthing of my wife's fortune will be left, for she has bought a pearl necklace, beautiful enough to turn the head of a saint.

Mille amitiés, à bientôt! I will thank you myself in the Tuileries, for I cannot walk up twenty steps, my heart refuses to allow me.

I hope you and the 'Constitutionnel' are flourishing.

To M. Théophile Gautier, Paris.[1]

Paris: June 20, 1850.

My dear Théophile,—Thank you cordially for all the interest you have been good enough to take in me. If you found me gone out when you last called, it is not that I am any better. I had only dragged myself as far as the Custom-house, against the doctor's orders; but it was absolutely necessary to take away packages.

I am to-day relieved from bronchitis and from an affection of the liver, which is so far an improvement; to-morrow they will attack the really serious malady, seated in the heart and lungs, and they give me great hopes of a cure. But I must be content to remain in the condition of a mummy, forbidden to speak or move, a condition that must last for at least a couple of months. It is due to your friendship to send you this bulletin, for your friendship is very precious to me in the solitude to which the faculty have condemned me. If you come again, let me know beforehand the day and the hour, that I may have the pleasure of receiving you, and of enjoying your society, whom I have not seen for so long.

Heartily yours.

[1] *Les Secrets de la Princesse Cadignau* was dedicated to him.

At the end of these lines, dictated to Madame de Balzac, the sick man had signed his name; then, in his own hand, he added:

'I can neither read nor write.'

THE END.

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